



만년만에 귀환한 플레이어

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PLAYER WHO RETURNED 10,000 YEARS LATER

- 만 년 만에 귀환한 플레이어 -

- VOLUME 1 -

-AUTHOR-

나비 케곡

[Centinni]

– STORY –

One day he suddenly found himself in hell. All he had was faith in God and a desire to live. From the first to the ninth thousand circles of hell, he absorbed dozens, hundreds of thousands of demons. Even the seven great dukes of hell bowed down before him.

– Why would you go back? Don't you have everything that's in Hell?

– Do what you have to do.

There's no food or entertainment. All there is in Hell are deserted plains and terrible demons.

“I want to go back home...”

And he decided to return to Earth ten thousand years later.

– GENRE –

Action Adventure Comedy
Fantasy Harem Romance

CHAPTER 1

LORD OF THE NINE THOUSANDTH CIRCLE OF HELL. RETURN TO EARTH (1)

The Nine Thousandth Circle of Hell is known as the strongest. It is the place where the strongest demons gather, battling each other endlessly for eternity. The sky glows blood red and flames scorch the burnt soil.

The battles raging on are not for the title of the strongest. No, that title has been taken for ten millennia.

Hell, which had been divided forever under the rule of the Seven Great Demons, was united by one man. The reason that all demons are united, the true lord — the Great King.

A dark-haired young man sat on a magnificent throne built from the bleached bones of the Seven Great Demons. Though he sat on the throne with his eyes closed, the aura he emanated could blow anyone away. Kneeling in rows in front of him were thousands of demons who were shaking in fear of his massive power.

One of these demons slowly began to inch towards the Great King. With the body of a hulking beast covered head to toe in crimson fur, it stood five meters tall on four legs. His body was solid, almost as if carved from stone, with a single horn atop his head. Numerous sharp teeth protruded from the bottom of his mouth, and massive bat wings loomed on either side. This was a typical appearance of the demonic forces.

A representative of the demonic forces bent down on one knee before the King.

“Oh, my King.”

The Pallock.

It was once said that no one could rule the Nine Thousandth Circle of Hell but him, yet now he knelt down in terror in front of a young man.

Anyone would be frightened looking at the ‘uncommon’ obedient stance the Pallock was in.

However, all the demons present here understood the fear of the Great.

The Lord.

Ten thousand years ago, a man with the Power of the Devourer descended into Hell. This man had immediately begun exterminating demons one by one.

He’d started with the First Thousandth Circle of Hell and eventually reached the Nine Thousandth Circle. Devouring demons along the way, he became stronger and stronger, becoming, in the end, the most powerful lord.

Thousands, no, tens of thousands of demons had been absorbed by his Power of the Devourer, and even the Seven Great Demons who’d never overcome one another in strength, fell to their knees before him.

The reason for the unification of all demons – a terrible monster, devouring them one after another.

Even Pallock, who didn’t know fear, couldn’t help shaking in terror.

— Why would you go back? Don’t you already have everything there is in Hell? — Pallock mumbled with fear, barely opening his mouth.

The man’s closed eyes opened a little and more energy began to flow from him:

— I have everything? What do I have?

The Pallock didn’t say anything.

The young King’s face was distorted as he spoke:

— To have something, there must be something in the first place. Tell me, what have we got? — There was accusation in his voice that was slowly turning into anger. — There’s no food, no entertainment. What in this damn place is there that I can possibly have?

The wasteland, the bloody sky, and the unquenchable tongues of flame – there’s

nothing in the Nine Thousandth Circle of Hell but that.

When he heard that, Pallock rounded his eyes.

— So you're hungry? I've prepared something special for you. Hey, guys! Bring it in!

— Yes, sir!

The demons, following orders, brought in a giant plate.

On it, covered in dark, almost black blood, laid the head of a demon.

— He is the last demon of their kind. Your Majesty, though it is a modest gift, it expresses our loyalty, please do not refuse, — said Pallock.

The spectacle presented to Kang Yu looked disgusting, causing his face to become even more distorted in anger, and he blurted out:

— Unintelligent bunch, that's not what I want! — He threw the plate on the ground, and it flew away with a crackle.

With his hands clenched firmly in fists, the young man stepped forward.

— I! I don't want to eat this disgusting looking and tasteless food. I, I... — His hands trembled.

The indignation swallowed him up so much that his voice began to break down.

— Kimchi Jjigae... I want a kimchi Jjigae.

— Kimchi Jjigae!

— It's my true desire!

— Food filled with blood and meat!

— No... Idiots, that's not it!

Kang Yu clenched his fists even harder and screamed.

It was a red dish with meat, but not at all what demons imagined.

Pallock looked at Kang Yu with eyes full of devotion:

— Whose head is it to be made of? Or probably from the entrails? Just say the word, and I'll cook it all, no matter how difficult it is.

— Kimchi Jjigae is something else! — Kang Yu said in a complaining voice.

For demons, “eating” was nothing more than devouring the defeated loser.

— And, you said you didn't have enough entertainment? Indeed, you have already killed all the Strongest...

— As was expected of the Lord.

— Lord of bloodshed and massacre!

— I want to read a manhwa or a novel!

Pallock, dissatisfied, punched the ground, with all his power. Under this pressure, a hole was formed in the ground.

— I am so weak that I can't please you... Please, kill me!

— Listen to me, please. — Kang Yu has returned to his throne in despair. — At least I need a woman. Yes, at least a woman...

— A woman? We have Lilith.

— Lilith!

— The Succubus Queen!

— The first beauty of Hell!

One of the demons lined up stepped forward and inquired:

— Will Lilith's heart not be enough? — Her voice was strange enough, and her many tentacles were already wrapped around the hands of the young Lord.

Her face with 18 eyes blocked everything. The King was silent.

18 eyes. There were dozens of tentacles moving by themselves. A tongue that looked like a snake.

She was called an incredible beauty. But Kang Yu's head hurt and he put his hand to his forehead:

"Succubus. Why a succubus?!"

It didn't look as he had imagined. After all, a succubus that eats other people's sexual energy should at least be beautiful. Yet she looked even worse than Pallock himself.

And she wasn't the only one. This was what all Hell's succubi looked like.

— Tonight I will come to His Majesty's bedroom.

— No, don't come.

— Oh, you must be embarrassed. You can't do this because you're the king of the Nine Thousandth Circle of Hell?

— Just don't come.

— Oh, how sweet. You shouldn't be so modest. I'll be with you my whole life.

— I beg you, disappear...

Kang Yu tilted his head down and covered his face with his hands. He was not the kind of person who only looks at someone's appearance in love.

On the contrary, he truly believed that if he fell in love, appearance would not play a big role.

However.

'Not to this extent.'

The problem wasn't that she was 'scary.' Her appearance just didn't fit human aesthetic standards in any way. At all.

‘To Earth...’ Kang Yu thought strongly about going back to Earth.

Despite the servants’ desperate attempts to persuade him to stay, his decision was firm. Contrary to their intentions, their pleading only strengthened his desire to return.

‘I’m going back.’

A few days before, he had finished the last Mighty Demon — which completed his preparations.

Finally, it’s time to be compensated for ten thousand years of torment.

CHAPTER 2

LORD OF THE NINE THOUSANDTH CIRCLE OF HELL. RETURN TO EARTH (2)

— Get ready!

— Your Majesty... — Pallock, catching the Lord's steadfastness, humbly bowed his head.

'It's His Majesty's choice.' He had sworn allegiance and could do nothing but follow the King's wishes.

— Pallock, do I have to do it again?

— I'm sorry... — Pallock nodded politely and went to the servants to gather the necessary items.

The weapons of the Seven Great Demons they fought were what had to be prepared.

It is said that the power contained in these weapons is so great, it could form a gap in space and time.

Recently, by consuming the last of the Strongest, Kang Yu had received the last weapon. And now, all of them were lying before him, ready for use.

— The preparation is complete.

— Excellent. — Kang Yu stood up from the throne and walked slowly towards the seven trophies, each adorned in different shapes and colors.

There were seven of them, and they comprised the power of the whole Nine Thousand Circles of Hell. The weapons complemented each other perfectly in both power and appearance.

If the King put all the energy that he had absorbed into these weapons, he really would be capable of opening a time portal.

— Ha... — Kang Yu quietly took in a deep breath.

He had waited so long for this moment, the chance to finally return to Earth, that he seemed to have lost his sense of reality.

‘At last.’

He’d finally be able to go home.

An unbelievable amount of energy from Kang Yu’s body began to flow into his weapon. The Power of a Devourer that had grown over tens, hundreds, thousands of years.

It was no exaggeration to say that even the Nine Thousandth Circle itself had already been absorbed by the King. His power was just that great.

Man Ma Jung.

(P.P.: In short, the Power of Lord Pandemonium)

This was the word used to describe the part inside Kang Yu that contained a mass of great power.

And now, the flow of Man Ma Jung perfectly complemented the weapons of the Seven Great Demons.

In an instant, there was a split in space, and a black passageway appeared before his eyes.

‘I can finally return to Earth.’ The vivid remnants of his memories on Earth came to mind at that very moment.

Even after ten thousand years, he had not forgotten his hometown.

In that place, there was no family nor woman waiting for him.

Even so...

‘Even if my town is small, it’s better than being here, in a place with no food or entertainment.’

He was willing to do anything to get out of this place that was full of bloodshed and murder.

‘So, it’s necessary to set the right time.’ Kang Yu didn’t want to move now. After all, the face of the Earth could have changed enormously in ten thousand years. So much so, that his beloved kimchi jjigae may no longer be there either. An Earth without kimchi jjigae was unimaginable. Just thinking of it caused goosebumps to rise all over his body.

Kang Yu decided to travel back to the time before he first went to Hell.

— Well, I will go now.

— King...

Pallock bowed his head in despair, for he knew the Lord’s will was firm.

From all of Lilith’s 18 eyes, tears resembling chicken droppings were pouring out. She began to speak:

— Are you really going to leave me?

— Don’t weep. It looks awful.

So terrible that maybe one day, her crying image will appear in a horror film.

She seemed to have misunderstood the Lord’s words, for her tentacles trembled slightly, and she bawled:

— Oh! Oh, what kind words! It seems my heart is torn apart by your love.

And when she finished speaking, one of the tentacles closest to her heart burst, and pus began to gush out of it.

“Oh, my God.”

— Oh, my king! Oh, my love!

“Don’t come near me.”

— Lilith wants to go with the King, too!

“Get lost.”

Looking at Lilith approaching while oozing with pus, Kang Yu hurried to the open portal without a trace of hesitation.

— Kang Yu! No matter what happens, Lilith will follow you!

Her screams gradually faded as his consciousness was enveloped by an unusual feeling.

— May our paths never cross! — He showed Lilith his middle finger.

No, not only to her, but to all the agony he had endured in the past ten thousand years.

‘This isn’t easy,’ Kang Yu thought as he tried to control time travel.

‘Time’ controls life, so it was difficult to manipulate.

Kang Yu set the time as close as possible to before he first went to Hell. An error of 10— 20 years would not matter.

After all, he was born an orphan, so he had nothing to change in the past and has no expectations for a better future. The only thing that mattered was getting back to the Earth he remembered.

With the time settings now established, an unknown force began to pull him deep into the dark tunnel.

Unable to resist, he calmly closed his eyes and relied on the force that was dragging him.

[Error of access to the nucleus.

Security system activated.]

[Error. Error.]

[Your power is too great.]

[All forces are focused on defending the kernel. The system is now in reboot mode.]

[Error. A mistake.]

[Your power is too great. There is no way to fix the defect.]

[It is impossible to fix the defect. Sealing has now commenced.]

[There is a mistake. There is a mistake.]

[Your power is too great. There is no way to fix the defect.]

[It is impossible to fix the defect. Sealing has now commenced.]

‘What’s that sound?’ he wondered. The completely unnatural voice could be heard from all over the place.

However, he was unable to ponder more about it.

— Ah... — His consciousness, like everything else around him, became obscured.

* * *

His body was in such great pain that he could hardly move his fingers.

Kang Yu moaned in pain as he gathered his strength and opened his eyes.

— Where am I? — The first thing he saw was a thick forest.

The sun’s rays penetrated through the dense foliage of the trees, tickling the cheeks of the young man.

— Phuh — Kang Yu took a deep breath and forced himself to get up.

A sharp pain shot across his body and spread to his head.

‘Okay, first I should do a self-diagnosis.’ He had to make sure that nothing irreparable had happened to his body.

[Status information downloading...]

‘What?’ As soon as he had thought about checking his physical state, a blue panel appeared before his eyes.

His eyes widened in amazement, small wrinkles appearing on his forehead, after which he turned his attention to the ‘status window.’

[Status Window]

Player Name: Oh Kang Yu

Level: 1 [Stage 1 – Awakening]

Level 1 Feature: The Power of the Devourer (Rating: ????)

Special skills are currently sealed.

Skills: None

Strength: 8

Vitality: 9

Physical ability: 7

Maryok: 0 (Mana that humans use)

Magi: 12

Intellect: 8

Wisdom: 7

‘What the hell is this?’ His condition board looked exactly like it did when he had first arrived in hell.

Kang Yu’s face was distorted in confusion – he couldn’t understand why his status was like that.

‘Are you saying that the powers of all those monsters, which I ate, are sealed?’

‘The Power of a Devourer.’

A unique power that had allowed him to survive in Hell, the power with which he was able to become the strongest Overlord.

And now he is told that his Man Ma Jung, his Power and all his abilities are sealed? He was panicked, horrified that the power he had accumulated for ten thousand years was no longer within his control.

— Ugh. — Kang Yu took a deep breath and tried to calm down.

Panic and rejection of reality would only make the situation worse. He understood that very well.

“Concentrate,” he murmured to himself, “First, you need to know about your condition.”

Kang Yu tried to summon Man Ma Jung, the force he had accumulated over tens, hundreds, thousands of years, from devouring demons.

‘I can’t feel it.’ Or rather, thanks to his skillful concentration, he was able to feel Man Ma Jung, but it was so miserably weak that the young man deemed it to be insignificant.

Now he could compare the strength of that power not to infinity, but rather to dust.

‘If this is how it is, it will be quite difficult to use any abilities.’ Kang Yu was obviously annoyed with this realization.

Among the demons, he had been considered the most powerful, thanks to the Devourer power.

Thanks to it, he could devour those who also possessed special powers. There were 666 such ‘special’ demons that he’d eaten. Among them were the Seven Great Demons, after consuming which, he learned how to use their Powers.

Each of the Powers is unique, but to use them you need to have a certain amount of energy.

The energy that he currently possessed was not enough to use the Powers.

‘In the current situation, it will be difficult to use the Blade as well.’ The power the

demon Shabnak previously owned was called the 'Blade Power.' It was an ability that summoned a sword from the body.

'It's not enough.' With sufficient energy, the Blade could be skillfully used, but at this moment, it was almost impossible.

Kang Yu focused on his left hand and called for the Blade Power.

And after a moment, a sharp, black blade was drawn out from the back of his hand.

The young man felt the energy from his body flow into the sword.

— It will be hard to get used to this. — His Powers which had previously been approaching infinity, giving infinite possibilities, were now like a puddle of water at the bottom of a dried up ocean.

The realization of this fact was depressing.

But the Status Window reflected his reality... For whatever reason his Powers were sealed remained a mystery, but it was clear that his Man Ma Jung was almost at zero. What injustice.

He recalled the moment when the Status Window suddenly appeared with the details of his characteristics.

'Did I enter the game?' Kang Yu suddenly wondered if he had gotten back to Earth.

"Kik, kik!"

A nasty rattle of metal reached his ears, and he turned to where the sound was coming from.

"Heh-heh-heh."

He soon realized the source of the sounds and tensed up.

They were short, their height just reaching the young man's chest, with skin and sharp teeth of a light green shade. They looked exactly like filthy creatures from the First Thousandth Circle of Hell.

As far as Kang Yu knew, there had never been such creatures on Earth.

— Is this not... the Earth? — He murmured in a tone full of despair.

Kang Yu couldn't even laugh at the fact that after ten thousand years of preparation, he was still unable to get back to Earth.

“Kia-aah!”

The large crowd of ugly-looking monsters, shrieking gleefully, threw themselves at him.

CHAPTER 3

LORD OF THE NINE THOUSANDTH CIRCLE OF HELL. RETURN TO EARTH (3)

— What went wrong? — The open passage had definitely been leading to Earth.

Yet the feelings were exactly the same as ten thousand years ago on his way to Hell. The situation didn't add up. Kang Yu was desperate for answers.

— Kia-ya-ya! — The monsters shouted even louder and rushed towards Kang Yu, pointing their crooked swords at him.

Kang Yu used his black dagger to fight them off. Within moments, the monsters' hands had fallen to the ground.

After successfully defending himself by injuring his opponents, he sat on the ground to inspect his sword. Although almost all of his Man Ma Jung was sealed, he was still the great ruler of the Nine Thousand Circles of Hell. It was easy to handle such insignificant opponents, even with only a sword.

'I'll deal with these guys first.' With monsters screaming wildly and attacking from all sides, he did not have time for reflection at the moment.

Kang Yu was more relaxed than ever. He looked at the monsters. An anger with the aggression of a predator began to rise inside him.

The monsters also felt his anger. Their legs began to fail them.

'There seem to be eight of them.' If Man Ma Jung was available, he wouldn't even have to move. He would have just brought them down with the help of the Power. However, things were different now.

'How unusual it is, having to move again.' He pushed his foot off the ground, instantly deflecting the monsters' attacks. Then, he sliced off their heads.

The experience accumulated by thousands of years in countless wars had helped him turn the crowd of monsters into a pile of cold corpses.

[Ding!]

[Level E Goblin successfully murdered.]

[Experience points increased.]

[Level increased by 3.]

‘I leveled up?’ By killing the monsters that attacked him, or more precisely goblins, the Status Window had appeared again.

Kang Yu confirmed that the level really had increased by three points. So had his energy per unit.

And it wasn’t just an increase in numbers, Kang Yu could feel that his body had become stronger.

‘It doesn’t matter now, raising the level, raising the energy, it doesn’t matter at all right now. I need to find out what this place is, whether it’s Earth or not. At the very least, I need to know if there are people living here.’

‘Oh, it would have been a lot easier with the powers of Alec,’ he smiled involuntarily as he remembered the Power to Fly. That ability allowed one to defy the law of attraction, but as it turned out, required much more power than Kang Yu now had.

Right now, he only had enough strength to fly as high as he could jump.

Despaired by how weak he was in his current situation, he was ready to fall dead after the goblins.

‘I need to gather more information.’ He needed to learn more about this unknown place.

Kang Yu extended his hand to the dead bodies of the goblins and barely opened his mouth.

— Devourment.

The Power of a Devourer.

The unique ability that had made him ruler of the Nine Thousand Circle of Hell has awakened. The dark power coming from the hands of the young man completely wrapped around the dead bodies of the goblins.

— Aaaaaah! Aaaah... — As the creepy voices faded away, the dark smoke that had absorbed the energy of the bodies dispersed.

Gradually, Kang Yu began to gain information about the goblins.

The power of a Devourer didn't allow him to read minds, but it did allow him to absorb information from the bodies he devoured.

He learned about goblins' body features, their habits, lifestyle and weaknesses.

But the information he was most eager to learn was not there. There was no information about this place.

'Damn it.'

Now that the battle was over, Kang Yu allowed his frustration and disappointment to take over him.

'Huh?'

Among the energy that he had just absorbed, there was also an incredibly familiar power.

— This is... — That energy was barely visible, but it was impossible to deceive his instincts.

Kang Yu's eyes were shining as he uttered: "Magi."

The bodies of goblins contained very little, but still some amount of Magi.

[Ding!]

[Magi level has increased by a unit.]

The moment Kang Yu thought about the Magi he'd just obtained, a notification window appeared. At the same time, he felt a small amount of force entering his body.

— Damn it! — Though he now had more strength, he swore yet again.

Magi was the power that the creatures of Hell have. That meant that if this place was Earth, there shouldn't have been Magi here. The likelihood that this wasn't the Earth increased.

'No...' There was anxiety on his face.

The reason he'd wanted to be the strongest in Hell was so that he could someday return to Earth.

Here, there were only endless massacres.

In his mind, in that long period of time, all he had done was fight. After all, no one in Hell was interested in anything but victory over the enemy.

'For me, there is no such thing.'

Even in the battles with the Great Demons, Kang Yu had remained uninterested, for he won every time. As such, he felt no satisfaction from his victories.

He was interrupted from his thoughts by a sound:

— Kia-ya-ya!

It was a scream from somewhere far away. The young man's eyes lit up again.

"It's..." This time, it wasn't the voice of a monster or a demon.

He felt it intuitively. It was definitely a human scream.

And besides...

"A lady."

Kang Yu's body was trembling. The tremor spread all over his body.

The shouting that came to his ears seemed to help cheer him up.

— Lady! — If someone had heard it, they would have called him a pervert for shouting like that.

But now he didn't care what anyone would think of him.

Approximately ten thousand years.

For ten thousand years, he hasn't seen any girls, not even in pictures.

In fact, it would be strange if he was able to retain his composure.

Kang Yu confidently took a step, then another one, and ran in the direction where the scream came from.

The Power of Acceleration.

It was a power that the demon Walefar used in his life, before it went to Kang Yu.

A black Magi emitted from his body, enveloping the young man's legs.

Then it began to disperse a little, and Kang Yu rushed like an arrow.

By human standards, it was an incredible speed, but for Kang Yu, it was the speed of a snail.

If he could still use Man Ma Jung right now, he'd have arrived in the right place in only a second.

It was frustrating for him to realize that he could no longer use his power at full potential.

— Ki-ee-ee!

— Kee-ee-ya-ya!

The screams became clearer and clearer.

However, they were mixed with the sounds of Kang Yu's recent attackers, the goblins.

'As long as she doesn't look like Lilith!' He wouldn't mind if she turned out to be old or overweight.

The important thing was for her to have two eyes, one nose and one mouth – that's enough.

'And no tentacles!' Even as he thought this, remembering Lilith's ugly tentacles, he was still focused on the Magi, now concentrated in his legs.

For the first time in a long time, he felt his breathing grow heavy.

It wasn't even a fight to the death, he was only trying to run faster, but it was making him gasp for air.

'I found it.' A wasteland stretched out of the thick forest laid in front of him.

And there were about a dozen goblins surrounding the girl, making her scream in terror.

She was sitting, clutching her bloody and obviously wounded legs firmly.

— Ah... — Kang Yu unwittingly exclaimed.

His body trembled when he saw those things surround the girl.

Black hair almost reaching her waistline, an unusual cut in the eyes. Puffy lips, a rising nose, and a small spot to the left of her mouth.

She was so beautiful that if Kang Yu had passed by her in the streets, he surely would have lowered his head in embarrassment.

But now, her beauty wasn't important at all. Now, her extraordinary beauty seemed to be a very minor problem.

'She's human.' That was surely a human being.

Two eyes, one nose, one mouth were the characteristics of a human being.

She was not festering tentacles, nor wings like a bat. Not a monster covered in bleeding skin. No. It's an ordinary human.

‘Oh, the Great...’ He couldn’t stand it anymore.

Kang Yu was so excited, that for the first time in ten thousand years of Hell, he wanted to turn to God again.

— Gyr-u-uh!

— Ouch...!

The girl looked at the untidy swords of goblins running around her, and was horrified.

Seeing the sword pointing in her direction, the girl must have reached a state of waiting. Waiting for death.

At that moment:

— Kia-ya-ya?! — the goblins, surprised, screamed.

Kang Yu broke their circle and started exterminating goblins one after the other with quick movements as if he were a predator.

— — A...? — The eyes of the girl who fell to the ground rounded.

She looked at Kang Yu with a look full of disbelief as he had brutally killed a herd of more than ten goblins in just a few seconds.

— Kihek! — The last goblin’s head fell thanks to the sharp black blade.

Rotating the blade in his hands after taking the goblin’s life, the young man walked towards the girl sitting on the ground.

— Thank you. — She stood up with her wounded legs and nodded in gratitude.

Kang Yu was a little shaken and took her in his arms to help her stand steadily.

— Ah... — She held his hands, and it was as if an electric charge ran through his body.

If he was in Hell, he would never have felt so good.

A human being.

Yeah, it was a human, a human he missed madly, a human he wanted madly to meet.

The sensations he was getting now were stirring his mind.

All the feelings he had endured for ten thousand years, suppressed for so long, spilled out. These feelings overwhelmed all others, completely occupying his mind.

— My name is Han Sol. Thank you for saving me. — She looked at Kang Yu, who was holding her, but she didn't try to free herself and just bowed her head once more in gratitude.

Kang Yu looked at her and made a sincere offer:

— Let's get married.

— What?!

— It would be great if we have three children.

— What?!

CHAPTER 4

UNFAMILIAR LAND WITH A FAMILIAR LANDSCAPE (1)

— What... What do you mean? — Han Sol looked at Kang Yu in embarrassment.

This offer was so sudden, she didn't know whether she should be angry or grateful to the young man.

— Ah, I'm sorry. — Common sense returned to Kang Yu, and he shook his head, letting go of the girl's hands.

'Get it together!' That was the person he had been so eager to meet.

'I can't look crazy from the start.'

— My name is Oh Kang Yu. Did you say your name was Han Sol? How's the wound, does it hurt a lot?

"Yes, that's right... The wound isn't that bad." But suddenly the pain from the wound made her scream, and she fell. "Ow!"

The moment she hit the ground, some rectangular object fell out of her pocket.

"Smartphone," he murmured, eyes shining as he watched the object fall.

He was sure it was a smartphone, a thing that he still had vague memories about.

'I guess... it's still Earth?' And her name on the phone was Korean. Han Sol.

What's more...

'We're talking!' Not in the devil's language as it was in Hell, but Korean as it was ten thousand years ago.

The ability to communicate was proof that this is the Earth, and she is obviously Korean.

‘It’s good that even there I practiced.’ So as not to forget Korean in Hell over time, Kang Yu forbade his servants to use the devilish language and taught them the basics of Korean.

— Are you all right? — Kang Yu tore a part of his clothing and tied it around the girl’s wounded leg.

It wasn’t normal clothing, it was a uniform made out of fabric scarcely found in Hell.

— Oh, yes, thank you. — She pulled up her bandage and her cheeks flushed red, even though the girl was suspicious of such kindness from a stranger.

She was noticeably stunned and at the same time strongly wary of both the suggestion of holding hands and the phrase about having children.

— Thank you for your concern. — If it wasn’t for Kang Yu, she’d be dead by now.

And if she’d been taken prisoner, something worse could have happened.

‘After all, it’s said that monsters are attracted to people too.’ Thanks to him, Han Sol could move on with her life in peace.

The girl felt remorse for treating the young man with fear.

‘Be grateful,’ Han Sol decided, and nodded again with a smile.

Although she had only recently become a Player, she had heard about the game world quite often.

For the benefit of the players, it was wise to organize a party, and then, to survive, betray friends in cold blood.

Of course, not everyone does this, but players like Kang Yu, who were ready to rush when they heard screams were a huge rarity.

— Don’t strain yourself and sit down.

— Okay.

The young man looked at Han Sol's smile and smiled a little too.

'Okay.' Winning her trust was important. Yes, it was.

Kang Yu wanted her to stay close. And not just because she's the first person he's met since returning from Hell. She could give important information to him.

'What the hell are those monsters doing on Earth?' The difference between the Earth he knew and the one he had arrived in was huge.

And the girl sitting in front of him was a great way to know what happened to Earth.

'This is my main task now.' Kang Yu stepped towards the phone that had fallen out. When he picked up the smartphone, he immediately pressed the 'Home' button.

That's how he learned one of the things he was interested in. It immediately showed up on the lock screen.

[22.05.2023 | 3:34PM]

"2023"? – he certainly went to Hell in 2018.

It turns out he's in the near future, just five years ahead.

'I didn't screw up the time setting.' On the contrary, he had been expecting a larger difference in time of 10-20 years.

He could consider his time travel successful because the error was much less than expected.

But in just five years, the Earth had changed too much.

'Does this mean that in five years, monsters have appeared on Earth?' Kang Yu didn't realize what could have happened to the Earth in just five years, with so many monsters walking around in the forest.

'That's not enough information.' There was clearly not enough information to understand the current situation here. The guy turned towards Han Sol.

— I think this is your phone.

— Oh, yes, thank you.

— May I ask what you're doing here?

— Um... — Han Sol continued to answer more sluggishly. — For some reason, I had to hunt on my own. Ha-ha. I'm quite new, but I decided to go through the gate to level E. It was a stupid thing to do.

It was clear from her voice that she was not happy with herself.

Kang Yu's eyes were shining as he listened: 'Gate', 'Player', so he was not on Earth, but on one of the levels.

'And the fact that she's "a new Player"...' Kang Yu thought about status window he'd seen earlier.

— What's your level? — he asked casually.

— I'm new, so it's only 6. You have a high level, right? What are you doing here?

Kang Yu's level was actually 3 units lower, but she believed it was a high level.

She would think it was weird considering he easily defeated a bunch of goblins, while she couldn't do it with level 6.

Of course, she was inaccurately evaluating his level based only on his strength.

— I have my reasons for being here.

— Ah... I see. — Han Sol didn't ask further after Kang Yu's ambiguous answer, and simply nodded.

Even though it was rare for high-class players to appear at lower levels, she had no right to question a guy who wanted to hide his reason for being here.

— Um...

— Can you stand up?

— Yes, thanks to you, I think I can walk.

— I'll be there for you.

— Oh, you don't have to. I don't want to cause any more trouble.

— You don't have to say no if you need help — Kang Yu put his arm around the teetering girl to support her.

Han Sol tilted her head awkwardly and her face turned red.

— Where do you need to go?

— That way, — the girl said, pointing her finger in the direction. Embarrassed, she didn't notice that the high-level guy didn't know where the gate was.

— Let's go. — Kang Yu held onto the girl tightly and they went slowly.

'It's a good thing she doesn't ask any unnecessary questions.' She certainly couldn't know anything about him, but to avoid unpleasant situations, he had to try not to cause suspicion.

'Otherwise, she'll think I'm crazy.' He didn't want to look like a total psycho in front of the first human he met, and in front of such a beautiful person.

He had to blend in with the local population.

Kang Yu thought about how he accidentally met Han Sol, who was now walking along with him.

— Here...

There was a snow-white gate before them.

It was about 30 meters high. If you compared it to the Black Gate from which Kang Yu came, this gate was many times bigger and more powerful.

'This is definitely not the Earth.' If she had come here through a gate, it meant that this forest filled with goblins was definitely not the Earth.

'Is this place... something like Hell?' A place that comes through a gate may well be like Hell.

'Where does this gate come from?' Kang Yu looked at the gate with a rapturous look, opening his eyes wide.

It was nothing like the Gate formed in Hell with the power of the Seven Great Demons. Absolutely.

— Kang Yu.

— Ah, yes. Let's go. — Han Sol's words pulled him out of his trance, and they stepped into the gate.

Flying through one world after another, their bodies moved in the tunnel with extraordinary ease.

— Let's gather the flock to E level and hunt the goblins.

— Got a tank?

— You don't need a robber?

— Sorry, no.

When they came out of the gate, they saw a group of people shouting at each other. It was as if they were in the bazaar.

Kang Yu looked at the people who had gathered at the gate entrance and felt a slight tingling in his chest again.

People.

What he wanted so much was for people to surround him from all sides.

'I really did come back.' Even though the earth was different from what he remembered, the scenery was still the same.

Now he was assuredly aware that he had returned, the remnants of his anxiety were gradually dissolving, and satisfaction and joy came in its place.

It felt like all his burdens had been lifted.

— Ahem, Kang Yu... — Han Sol neatly called out a guy, and he turned to her. — If you have time, why don't you come over and visit? I want to at least buy you lunch. —

She said it in a guilty voice, first looking at Kang Yu's torn clothes and then at her bandaged leg.

Of course, it would have been much more appropriate to offer financial compensation, but she didn't have that opportunity. Furthermore, she did not want to part with her savior by simply saying "thank you".

Kang Yu was immensely surprised to hear her offer.

The girl he had just rescued invited him to come and visit!

In the last ten thousand years, he could only see girls in his imagination. That's why, when he received the invitation, he felt a passionate burning desire.

The excitement was so strong that you could compare it with an invitation for drinks at the bar.

(P.P.: In the Korean version, "come to visit to eat ramen together").

'This is...' Kang Yu clenched his hands into fists.

A strong desire spread throughout his body.

'Warmth,' his imagination played out.

He imagined the two of them raising three children in a warm, cozy house, bringing a smile to his face.

'How warm,' he thought. The heart that had grown cold over ten thousand years was once again filled with warmth.

CHAPTER 5

UNFAMILIAR LAND WITH FAMILIAR LANDSCAPE (2)

— It's not polite to refuse, so I'll gladly accept your invitation. — Kang Yu's eyes shone when he nodded.

He wouldn't even think of rejecting such an offer.

— Mmn, then follow me. — Han Sol smiled a little and turned around.

At that moment one of the men at the gate came in their direction. He was dressed in war-like clothes.

— Player ID, please.

— Ah, here you go. — At the request of the man, Han Sol calmly pulled out an E-level ID.

— The identity is confirmed. — Not even a second later, he checked her identity and nodded approvingly with a tired expression.

For some reason, Kang Yu had the impression that the man was a barkeeper checking documents.

— Sir, your documents.

'What a mess.' Kang Yu's face changed, and he got tense.

Who knew this could happen?

It was a problem.

Right now, he didn't have a player ID.

'If I say I lost it, it'll get more complicated.'

And if he found his old ID, some problems might come up.

Especially considering the fact that he moved into the future for five years.

Then all his plans for a peaceful return to Earth and his future life could collapse.

‘And most importantly...’ If the situation gets more complicated, he could miss out on his chance to visit Han Sol.

What he’d been waiting for ten thousand years could dissolve like sea foam.

‘I can’t let that happen.” If he missed such a great chance, he’d be a complete fool.

As they say, ‘Strike while the iron’s hot’

— Wait for a second. — Kang Yu, with a serious expression, rummaged through his pocket.

Of course, there was nothing in his pocket.

‘It’s going to be difficult to use force now, but...’ He’d noticed how the man checked Han Sol’s I.D.

It didn’t even take a second to check.

— Just a second... — It was time to use what little energy he still had.

— Here it is. — Kang Yu took his hand out of his pocket and covered his palm with his thumb.

At the same time, the Power also manifested itself.

The Power of Illusion.

Thanks to it, the consciousness of the person you’re talking to would become clouded and he would see whatever was necessary.

The use of this power required a tremendous amount of Magi.

Moreover, the higher the level of the interlocutor, more power was required, but

fortunately, the person who checked the identity cards was lower than Han Sol in level.

Under the influence of the power, the gaze of the man in uniform dimmed for a moment. He looked at Kang Yu's palm and nodded slowly.

— Your identity has been confirmed. — The check lasted just a second, but all of Kang Yu's accumulated energy was used up.

Kang Yu held back his heavy breathing and lowered his hand.

— Then, we'll go.

— Yes, we will.

They turned their back on the inspector and headed towards Han Sol's house.

'Finally.' It seemed like his legs were carrying themselves in the right direction.

As someone once said, 'There's no limit to human greed.'

At first, he thought it would be enough to meet an ordinary girl with two eyes, one nose and one mouth, but as more time passed, the more he admired the beauty of Han Sol.

Imagining what would happen at her house, he clenched both hands firmly.

'YOLO!'

* * *

— This is my house.

He followed Han Sol to a shabby-looking building.

Not only did her house look old, but so did everything in the area.

'She doesn't seem to be living well?' The place they had come to looked nothing like the attractive skyscrapers in a row he had anticipated seeing.

He looked at Han Sol with a look filled with confidence:

“It’s okay, I’ll make some quick money and buy us a nice house.”

He had already mapped out their future happy life together.

The door opened.

— Mom, I’m home!

‘Mom?’ Of course, Kang Yu’s disillusioned mind had thought she was living alone.

That’s why his face was expressing his extreme disappointment right now.

An exhausted middle-aged woman rushed to meet them.

— Is everything okay? Did you hurt yourself?

— It’s okay.

— You have company with you, just like I told you to, right?

— Ah... yes, of course... — said Han Sol, tugging at her sleeves and avoiding meeting her mother’s expectant eyes. Then, she looked at Kang Yu and explained in a hurry:

— This is Kang Yu, and we met at the Dungeon. I was in a dangerous situation because of a monster attack, but Kang Yu saved me.

— Oh, thank you, Kang Yu! — The middle-aged woman grabbed Kang Yu’s hands and bowed her head gratefully.

He sensed that the woman was very worried about her daughter, who ‘travels’ all the time.

‘Shit.’ Kang Yu was listening now, but couldn’t hear the woman’s gratitude.

‘So, she really was only calling me for lunch,’ Kang Yu thought, looking at Han Sol.

The future that Kang Yu had planned in his head was shattered.

He was in the mood to climb to the top of the mountain and then throw himself down.

— Kang Yu...

— Oh, yeah. I was just thinking. — He quickly turned his attention back to reality.

No one had promised him anything, but he still felt cheated, and despair clouded his mind.

— Our house... it's not very nice, as you can see. But don't worry, our food is great. — Han Sol, looking at the grim face of the guy, thought he was disappointed with their place of residence.

— Ah, don't worry, that's not why I'm like this. — Before going to Hell, Kang Yu had been a lonely orphan, and lived in a small room that looked much worse than her house.

There had been days when it was difficult to even get food.

'But still better than Hell.' In fact, living on Earth, even if you are hungry, is much better than living in Hell among constant battles, in which you constantly risk your life.

— Please, come in, Kang Yu.

— Sorry, our modest home is not often visited by guests. — The guy was warmly welcomed and invited to come in.

The size of the house was about 20 pyeong.

(P.P.: the measure of land area; 1 pyeong = 3.3 square meters).

Compared to its shabby appearance, the size was quite decent.

— Kang Yu, wait a moment. I'll get everything ready quickly.

— Would it be all right if I asked you for a favor?

— Yes, of course. — Han Sol's expression turned serious and nodded affirmatively.

Kang Yu continued in a calm voice:

— I lost my phone. Can I use quickly yours?

— Ah, of course! — She took the smartphone out of her pocket and gave it to Kang Yu.

The phone looked very old, and there was a thick crack on the screen. Kang Yu recognized the phone model.

‘Even though five years have passed...’ he thought to himself, convinced that the girl really wasn’t in the best position.

‘But can I scroll through the news on the Internet on it?’ He needed to figure out what had happened to Earth in five years.

The Gate and the Players. That’s something that wasn’t exactly on the Earth he was used to.

Kang Yu found the articles from five years ago and began reading them carefully.

[Sharp changes 22.02.2018. Earth changes in an unrecognizable direction]

[Riots caused by a large number of gates all over the Earth]

[Monsters call for reinforcements. Defenders army brutally murdered]

[America urgently offers to unite all countries.] [Korea has become the 9th country to join the alliance]

[The first Players appeared in America. Who are they?]

[A sharp increase in Players all over the planet. Are they the hope of humanity?]

[Are romances becoming a reality? The Players had appeared in Korean novels over a decade ago. A large number of novels, at the request of “The Player”]

— Hmm... — Kang Yu, leisurely looking through the articles, frowned.

February 22, 2018, is the day that the Gate appeared all over the world. And also the day that he’d walked through the black gate to Hell.

So I just walked into one of the many gates. If you think about it, it was probably true.

Kang Yu looked for information about his gate, but there was no detailed description

of the gate on the Internet.

‘Then I’ll look again.’

If it threatened national security, the information probably wouldn’t be available online.

Once everything was prepared, he should go to the state authorities.

— What are you looking for so diligently? — Han Sol, who was busy cooking, approached him for a while.

— I had to make sure of something, so I flipped through the news.

— Should I cook lunch later then?

— No, I’m good. Let’s eat.

He generally understood the big picture. He was glad that, unlike Hell, he could move around on his own and learn more about the changed Earth.

— Everything is ready, wait a little longer. — Han Sol returned from the kitchen with a deep pot. — Kimchi jjigae. I would give you a plate, but alas. —

With a guilty expression on her face, she put the pot on the table and opened the lid.

The fragrance instantly flew all over the room, causing him to drool at the dish immediately.

Kang Yu stared at the kimchi jjigae. Pleasant thoughts filled his head.

— Kimchi... jjigae... — He kept staring at the pot, or rather, at its contents.

The broth bubbled temptingly, the red kimchi was fragrant, and the pieces of meat on top seduced the boy.

— Kimchi jjigae!!!

Kang Yu had waited so long for this moment that his heart beat faster with excitement.

This was what he’d been dreaming about for ten thousand years every day.

He leaned sharply toward the table like a tramp who had been hungry for weeks.

‘It’s good to be back.’

A warm tear rolled down his cheek.

CHAPTER 6

THE ANGER OF A DEMON (1)

The house was a little over 20 pyeong.

The young man with a large appetite was gulping down the dish prepared for him so loudly so that the sound of his munching could be heard all over the house.

— I suppose... You are very hungry? — Han Sol looked at the insatiable guy and hesitantly smiled.

You could say she was a bit discouraged by his display of greediness.

Kang Yu wasn't paying attention to the girl's rouge face, he was only focused on the food.

— It's delicious, — he said, as he placed a rather thick piece of meat on a spoonful of white rice and dipped it in soup, then put a kimchi leaf on top with sticks. Then he opened his mouth and swallowed it all at once with a spoon in his mouth. At the same time, he felt dizzy with joy and his vision was blurred.

— Damn delicious. — He savoured the flavours that he hadn't tasted for ten thousand years with every cell of his body.

He was as excited as he was when he first met Han Sol.

— Oh... — His excitement was replaced by pleasure.

The agony of the last ten thousand years appeared in his head as a huge panorama.

— Damn, it's so delicious, — Kang Yu cried like a small child, emptying the pot of kimchi.

Actually, he didn't need 'food.' After his body had absorbed Magi, his bodily functions had become like a demon's.

Because of the Magi's movement in their bodies, demons didn't need food.

‘Poor guys.’ Kang Yu, who was now enjoying himself with a delicious meal, felt pity for demons.

Because there was still a human element left in the guy, even though he didn’t need food, he could taste it. To be more precise, the demons could also distinguish between the tastes, but they were distorted and did not bring them any pleasure.

— Is it that good? — Han Sol asked, looking at the sobbing man devouring the kimchi jjigae.

She was confident in her cooking skills.

Because ever since she was a little girl, she often did her own housework.

And the kimchi jjigae she had just cooked was made with a few secrets she had learned from years of experience.

However.

The food she cooked wasn’t so delicious that someone would cry.

— It was very, very tasty. — Kang Yu feverishly nodded several times to confirm it.

— I’m glad you liked it so much. — She smiled, satisfied.

Although it was unusual to see a guy crying over food, especially since it was an everyday meal, it certainly didn’t upset her.

This was undeniable proof that her kimchi jjigae was excellent.

‘Thank God.’ She’d been worried that she had nothing to offer her savior besides food, but looking at his reaction, the guilt started to dissipate.

She felt his kindness and felt even more warm feelings towards the young man.

‘What am I thinking about...’ It was far from a situation to think about developing relationships.

She thought about the conditions she was living in and took a deep breath.

— Ah... — Kang Yu looked at the empty pot with a sad look. — It wasn't enough... —

Though he did not need food, his empty and motionless ten thousand years body finally came into motion, and all his feelings were so intense that he was ready to scream.

— Shall I cook some more?

— Yes!

— Ha-ha, wait a minute.

Kang Yu's eyes were glowing as he nodded involuntarily.

To Han Sol, the young man's image seemed adorable, which made her smile a little. She stood up, taking the completely empty pot.

— It's nice to watch a young man eat with such an appetite.

— This is the best kimchi jjigae I've ever had in my life.

And those weren't just empty words.

The flavor of the dish she cooked was so vivid, it felt like a drug had been planted in it.

'I can't lose that flavor.' By all means, he wanted to keep eating that kimchi jjigae. How? The answer was simple: 'By getting married.'

Of course, the taste seemed even better because he had anticipated it for ten thousand years.

But now there was no way he could think with logic nor reason.

He imagined their future together again, with delicious kimchi jjigae, and his eyes shone even brighter.

'I'll make you happy!'

He was the lord of the Nine Thousandth Circle of Hell, the monster who ate tens of thousands of demons.

He, who was at the tip of the food chain, lost control of emotions to just kimchi jjigae. It looks like a comedy, but it's actually a drama.

— You were eating with such an appetite that I've decided to make more. — She presented a second meal and smiled nicely, pushing the pot closer to Kang Yu. She was being very courteous to this man she hardly knew.

— Thank you, — Kang Yu took a spoon and started to stuff his mouth with the second serving. The spoon was rattling as he ate nonstop.

— It's perfect! — First he felt the delightful taste on the tip of his tongue, and then, just like last time, pleasant emotions rushed through his whole body, and he continued to indulge in the dish.

Han Sol continued looking at him with a tender gaze.

At that moment, the door opened with a rumble, and a young guy entered the room.

— Hey, Han Sol! They say you went to the gate alone without my permission? Come here.

It was a handsome blonde with short hair, dressed in an ironed suit. He stormed up to the girl, cursing.

The girl's eyes grew serious.

— Tae Hyun...

— Tae Hyun, who allowed you to talk to your sister like that!

With her brother's arrival, she started trembling a little.

He smirked and stood tall in front of Han Sol.

— I asked you, who let you go to the gate alone?

— I'm also a Player now. And you're the reason I can't find a party.

— You're still an amateur, you don't know anything.

Tae Hyun's face had an intimidating grin on it. He forcefully grabbed the girl's shoulder.

— I told you to cut the crap and join our guild. Everyone in my party will treat you well, — her brother hissed in her ear. His eyes were gleaming.

Han Sol looked at her brother with disgust.

Tae Hyun.

Her brother, who was three years older.

“‘Garbage like this man cannot be called my brother.’ She clenched her fists tightly and continued to stare at her brother.

Ever since the Gate opened five years ago, Tae Hyun had become a real problem.

Even though their father passed away early and their mother was raising two children on her own, it hadn't been so bad. Their mother had a good career and made a lot of money.

But in high school, Tae Hyun was involved in a violent case, after which more problems began to arise regularly. He even went as far as neglecting and blackmailing his mother.

Because of that, their mother got sick, and then things got much worse.

And, as they say, trouble doesn't come alone. Tae Hyun joined the Players.

It turned out that he had good skills, so he quickly reached level 10, got a B-rank certificate, and joined the guild called Andras.

Andras Guild.

The guild, named after one of King Solomon's 72 demons.

As a guild with a name like this, there were many bad rumors about it.

Tae Hyun had bent over backwards to achieve a higher position in his guild.

Even though it wasn't a large guild, Tae Hyun's guild had an important place among medium guilds. So he wanted a higher rank. That's why he was in need of Han Sol.

More precisely, her appearance.

'If she accompanied the elders... ' There were no girls who could match the beauty of Han Sol. If he'd presented Han Sol to an elder, he would be able to get a high position.

Despite wishing to make his family member a scapegoat, he felt no remorse at all.

— I don't want to! There's no way I'm joining your guild.

— Ha, dummy. You just don't know how the world works. Do you think if you always do the right thing, it'll make life easier? Ha? If you come with me to the elders now, it'll make life easier for you and me.

— How... how can you say that to a family member?

— Ha, family? That's bullshit. How can people who look like tramps be my family?

— Who do you think made us live like this?!

Tae Hyun just smiled in response to his sister's screaming.

— Who are we living like this because of? Because of the early death of our father, or because of our useless mother.

— You bastard! — She lashed out with anger.

Han Sol squeezed her fists even harder and swung at him.

He was no longer family to her. He was a wolf in sheep's skin, no, not even like that — he was garbage.

Tae Hyun stopped her fist with only a slight movement of his hand. He grabbed and squeezed her wrist, inflicting pain all over her body.

Now, she, a level 6 girl, couldn't possibly compete with the guy at the 30th level.

— Let go of me!

— If you've got nothing but a pretty face, then think about using it. Your brother's an angel, clean up your bad habits.

— Tae... Tae Hyun!

— Go away, woman, — he ignored his mother standing before him and stomped to the living room without letting go of the girl's wrists.

— How about we do it today, huh?

When he walked from the lobby to the living room, he saw Kang Yu eating kimchi jjigae.

— Are you messing with guys? — Tae Hyun asked with a mockery and looked at the girl.

When he let go of Han Sol's wrist, he looked at Kang Yu and said:

— Hey there, you're bothering me. Get out of here.

After letting out a few more swears, he sauntered over to Kang Yu's side.

But the young man was so focused on the food that he didn't care about Tae Hyun's outrage.

— You bastard get out, I said! — He went out of his mind and swung at Kang Yu, who ignored him.

But instead of hitting the guy, he turned the table over. And...

— A...

Kimchi jjigae...

It fell...

On the floor...

— Ahhhhh!

Lord of the Nine Thousandth Circle of Hell.

The monster ruler of Hell, who has made Great Demons bow before him.

The greatest of demons, the greatest of Devourers, the greatest of rulers.

With a voice like the roar of tens of thousands of demons, he screamed:

— My kimchi jjigae!!!

CHAPTER 7

THE ANGER OF A DEMON (2)

‘Who does he think he is?!’ Tae Hyun glanced at the overturned pot of kimchi jjigae and snickered at Kang Yu, who was howling.

— Are you crazy? — How dare his sister drag some homeless guy into the house? She seemed to be too kind, and she doesn’t have any willpower. — Where did you find that tramp?

— Ka... Kang Yu, run away! — Han Sol screamed, ignoring her brother’s question.

Tae Hyun was bordering level 30, while the “Devourer” was only at level 4.

Without taking into account the Devourer’s level, which wasn’t that high, compared to the girl, he was still incredibly strong.

Regardless, Han Sol didn’t want to drag her savior into domestic disputes, and she especially didn’t want the guy to get hurt.

A tempting thought came to her mind:

‘What if Kang Yu could resolve this situation as well?’ But it was just a passing fantasy, and the girl shook the thought away. Tae Hyun was at B-level despite being second rank, even though you usually have to get a third or fourth rank to get to B-level.

A Player’s strength was classified according to his abilities and level.

Therefore, we can say that compared to other people, he was a more talented player.

‘Kang Yu is in danger.’ She looked at the young man with anxiety in her eyes.

— Aaaah, my kimchi jjigae! — Kang Yu sobbed, looking at the soup spilled across the floor. He couldn’t have known the girl’s worries.

Tae Hyun didn’t like the reaction, and his face twisted.

— Hey, bum, stop yelling and get up.

Kang Yu slowly turned his head towards the smug face of Tae Hyun.

Rage was building up in him.

— Ah?! — When he faced Kang Yu, Tae Hyun, unexpectedly took a step back.

‘What the...?’ A human couldn’t have that kind of gaze.

It was the gaze of a ferocious, wild beast.

‘No...’ His face turned pale.

Wild beast? No, it felt different.

It was a hatred that pulled him down, strangled him. Animals couldn’t do that.

He was frightened by the eyes he saw. Empty and dark, they were like the deepest abyss.

‘It’s like...’ Tae Hyun found the right word to describe that look.

He had no doubts about it:

— Demon.

Demon. He had never seen a demon in person, nor did he know exactly what they looked like.

But for some reason, he was sure that there was no other term that could describe Kang Yu’s face and darkness in his eyes.

Tae Hyun took a deep breath and gathered his strength. Suddenly, the evil energy that had been hovering in the air before had evaporated.

‘It must have been my imagination.’ He looked carefully at Kang Yu.

A homeless person could never have emitted such a frightening wave of ardent anger.

Tae Hyun shook his head trying to throw away the sensations he had just experienced.

He didn't want to admit that some homeless man who yelled at him because of the kimchi jjigae he spilled could scare him, even for a moment.

Kang Yu turned to Tae Hyun, who was looking at him, and spoke in a quiet voice:

— You.

— What?

— Did you spill my kimchi jjigae?

— Ha, you're really out of your mind. — Tae Hyun, dumbfounded by the absurdity of what was going on, giggled unintentionally, and concentrated on the Power in his fists.

When he found himself on level 10 of the second rank, he had discovered a special skill, Flame of Hands.

The blue flame flashed in his palms. Because of the fire, the temperature in the air rose to such an extent that it seemed to light up the house a little more.

“Special skill.”

This is a unique ability that only one Player has.

It was a power that was supposed to help protect the Earth from the huge amount of monsters jumping out of the Gate.

— Look out! — Han Sol hastily shouted out, and she extended her hand.

A light arrow came out of her palm and headed for Tae Hyun's head.

Her special skill was Light, rank D.

In fact, her strength was more suitable for support and rather than causing damage.

As soon as Tae Hyun waved his hand, his fire swallowed up the arrow.

An incomplete ability was nothing more than fun for the Player.

— Ha! — Tae Hyun smirked and attacked Kang Yu.

The blue flames thickened and headed towards the guy.

— Huh? — Kang Yu twitched his head with a sharp movement and escaped the attack.

Suddenly, a black blade appeared from the back of Kang Yu's hand.

Kang Yu concentrated, lowered his head for a second, and then, with swift movement, deflected another attack, this time swinging the blade back.

— Ah! — Tae Hyun shouted and staggered.

'He wasn't that fast.' The blade was a threat, but the enemy lacked speed.

Tae Hyun, focusing on the blade, rushed forward.

At that moment, Kang Yu hit the enemy in the solar plexus with a sharp movement of his leg.

From the beginning, the blade was nothing more than a distraction.

Something that could take Tae Hyun's attention and distract him.

— You bastard!

The damage caused by the blade was small.

Tae Hyun, still speaking crudely, swung at Kang Yu again.

But this time, too, he ducked successfully and hit Tae Hyun twice, without much effort.

Kang Yu stepped towards the staggering guy and reached out with his left hand.

Tae Hyun hastily activated his Power, his hands ablaze with flames, and he directed them towards Kang Yu.

Kang Yu guessed that his opponent would do this, so he pulled his left-hand back and hit him in the jaw with his right hand.

When he got hit, he fell to the living room floor.

Tae Hyun, pale, looked at Kang Yu from the ground up.

The most important thing was that his endurance and speed have not decreased.

That meant that his opponent was a player with lower levels and skills.

But...

‘Who is he?’ This guy used battle methods he’d never heard of.

Tae Hyun realized that the sword was just an illusion and Kang Yu instantly found his weaknesses. Using the blade as bait, he went on to hand-to-hand combat.

— Ahh! — Tae Hyun was in so much pain that he squealed but still rushed to Kang Yu.

But the outcome was the same. Kang Yu surpassed him in strength by so much that it seemed as if he was fighting a small child.

— What the hell are you?!

There were no flaws in his actions.

It felt like there was a clear advantage in his fighting skills.

It felt like he had decades of training and fighting behind his back.

Tae Hyun, who just a few minutes ago watched a homeless man eat kimchi jjigae, sobbing, was now sobbing himself, but in pain.

— Ahhhh!

Kang Yu’s black blade was removed from his hand.

— It hurts! It hurts!

— I haven’t finished yet, — Kang Yu said in a cold tone, and shook his palm, which the blade was sticking out of just a second ago.

He broke the guy’s arm and not only the scream but also the crunch of his bones echoed through the house.

— Aah! — Tae Hyun was in incredible pain.

Kang Yu, shaking with anger, looked at his right hand again.

The Lord's wrath could not be filled with just one broken arm.

— You almost redeemed yourself. You shouldn't have overturned my kimchi jjigae.

— Kimchi jjigae?! It's just soup! Hey, you're hurting me!

Kang Yu gave Tae Hyun a hard look.

— What? — He heard something that didn't fit in his head. — Are you saying it's "just soup?" —

Bullshit. It's bullshit.

You can't use the word "just" to "kimchi jjigae".

It's unthinkable.

— It's you. You're saying it. That. Kimchi jjigae. Is only. Soup?!

— Ahhh saaave meee! —

It was time for more violent measures.

Kang Yu kicked a guy's head like a soccer ball over and over. His whole face was covered with splatters of blood almost at once.

— Ahhh! Ahhhh! — Tae Hyun was moaning in pain.

Compared to Kang Yu, he should be superior in all respects. Accordingly, he shouldn't be feeling this hellish pain.

But the pain was getting stronger and stronger.

— So, say it again. What do you think about kimchi jjigae?

— Oh... kimchi jjigae is a holy dish.

— That's right, — Kang Yu said, nodding with a smile.

He grabbed the guy shivering in terror by his hair and quietly said it:

— Once again... What is kimchi jjigae?

— It's a divine meal! — Tae Hyun answered with a tearful voice.

Kang Yu didn't like that answer, and his face changed.

— You're being too quiet.

— Kimchi jjigae is the best thing humankind ever came up with.

— You're not putting your soul into words!

— Kimchi jjigae is a! Wonderful! Dish!

— Even louder! Like how believers pray to the Lord God! Like a guy in front of a girl he loves! Put your feelings into it!

— Kimchi jjigae is the best dish on Earth! — It was a scream turning into a shriek.

But it could not satisfy Kang Yu's wish.

He bent over and shouted:

— Are you loud enough? No! Raise your voice to the seventh octave!

— Kimchi jjigae!!! — And then, when he broke his voice, he coughed up.

Kang Yu has awakened to the cruelty again.

— What did you just do? Aren't you going to talk properly?

— I'm... sorry!

— Let's do it one more time. Let's do it again!!!

— Kimchi jjigaaae!!! The best!!! Dish!!!! — In this scream, he put all his remaining

energy into it.

Now Kang Yu was happy and slammed the guy on his shoulder with a smile.

— Ugh... — Tae Hyun exhaled and cried.

He had tears and snot, and soon it all turned into a mess on his face.

— What the... Crazy person...

CHAPTER 8

THE ANGER OF A DEMON (3)

— Ha-ha-ha! — Tae Hyun had a bitter look on his face, his scream echoing all over the house.

‘Why did I get beaten by that jerk?’ If it was someone from the comic book world, he wouldn’t be so upset.

But now he wasn’t beaten up by a big guy, but a regular hobo.

‘Hobo of kimchi jjigae.’ Tae Hyun looked at Kang Yu with bitterness in his eyes.

Kang Yu was happy with that reaction and smiled at him.

— What? Do I look crazy reacting like that just because of kimchi jjigae?

— No... no! — Kang Yu had hit the bull’s-eye, and so Tae Hyun hurriedly took his eyes off.

Kang Yu continued with a satisfied look:

— You... you just don’t know anything— and there’s no way he could have known.

Because he was able to live for ten thousand years because of his feelings and decisions.

Or because demons live for an unlimited amount of time.

Although they do not eat or drink, they can exist forever.

It’s possible that Kang Yu, who is now half full of Magi, could live forever.

However...

There’s still a human half of him.

He remembered, with his soul and body, what it's like to enjoy delicious food and drinks.

But you can't find and feel that feeling anywhere in the Nine Thousandth Circle of Hell.

Because demons are strangers to that feeling by nature.

Accordingly, he couldn't satisfy his desires either.

He prevented himself from losing his passion and mind in every way.

For ten thousand years, maintaining a healthy mind and survival in the endless battles that were carried out by the immortal demons, was his main goal.

To exist as a man in the devil's world was like torture.

He was never satisfied.

Thirst never went away.

Hell was felt by Hell because of the blazing pillars of fire and the vast desert surface.

He associated Hell with emptiness.

— You live in a wonderful family, but you can't understand it, just as you can't understand the value of the air you breathe in.

If the air disappeared, the man who couldn't stand without air for even a minute would die. Except that no one is grateful for the air.

Regret only comes when something you are used to becomes inaccessible.

— Ex... excuse me! I was wrong! — Tae Hyun didn't know what that guy was talking about.

But now he couldn't have done anything better than rubbing his hands to say sorry.

— Okay, I'll accept your apology, — Kang Yu said and grabbed Tae Hyun by the side.

— Aah! Save me!

— Don't worry, you won't die.— He didn't feel sorry for Tae Hyun, but even though he already had blood on his hands, he didn't want to kill him.

It was all for one reason only:

— I'm tired of it.

Even though murder was the norm in Hell, it was nothing than a serious criminal offense on Earth.

Of course, if you just let someone go, there could be worse problems, but Kang Yu will take care of that now.

— With... thank you! — Tae Hyun bent his head, happy to hear Kang Yu's words that he wouldn't die.

Kang Yu looked at Tae Hyun's bent head and smiled quietly.

— Although, it would have been better if you had died.

Tae Hyun stopped making any noise.

— You'll understand soon enough. — Kang Yu said and called for Magi.

It was the Power of Fear.

The person to whom this power of Orobas is applied becomes afraid and turns into a puppet that won't resist even in his thoughts.

It's not a force that takes a lot of Magi, but it was picky about the conditions.

'It's hard to achieve complete intimidation.' It's not easy to intimidate a person enough that fear is entrenched in his soul.

It's a force that could only be used under conditions that were perfectly matched to those of today.

'I need to give it a try.'

— Ahhh... — The power would definitely reinforce the fear already in place.

Tae Hyun wet his pants and looked at Kang Yu like a madman.

— Now you're going to live with that feeling for the rest of your life, — said Tae Hyun with an ominous grin.

— No... I don't... want to... — Tae Hyun's heartbreaking voice told that he didn't have the strength.

Kang Yu shrugged his shoulders and answered calmly:

— If I did well, it wouldn't make me feel any better. — The phrase Tae Hyun previously said to Han Sol now came back to him like a boomerang.

— Well, go now. Don't tell anyone what happened here. — Kang Yu lazily waved for him to shoo, like swatting at a fly.

The guy was under his control.

Even under torture, he won't tell anyone about anything.

Tae Hyun, who looked completely smashed, staggered out.

Han Sol, who saw him come out, walked towards Kang Yu.

She came up to him and bowed low.

— Thank you, Kang Yu. If it hadn't been for you, I wouldn't have been strong enough...

This was the man who saved her from the goblins not so long ago.

And now, he saved her from Tae Hyun, who tortured her for several years. She didn't know how to thank Kang Yu...

It was not a deed that could be repaid with just words of gratitude.

— Kang Yu, I will thank you for your help in any way I can,— she said in a clear and sincere voice, and bowed again.

Kang Yu turned away and smiled a little.

— Let's clean up first, because the house looks like a real mess.

— Ah, just a minute, I...

— The two of us can do it quicker, — Kang Yu said and started cleaning.

Han Sol followed his example.

During the cleaning, she asked carefully:

— Where do you live?

— Ah... — Because of the unexpected question, only a heavy sigh came out of his mouth.

'I guess my room is gone.' He hadn't paid his rent in five years, so someone else must have moved into his little room.

Only now did Kang Yu realize that he's really a tramp who doesn't even have a place to sleep.

'Okay, first we need to find a place to live.' That wasn't a big concern for him.

Now, compared to the past, he had great power.

It wouldn't be hard to get a new place to sleep with his strength.

— Because of some problems, I don't live anywhere yet.

— Huh? I mean...

— Well, at this point, you could say that I'm a person without a specific place to live,
— Kang Yu said, shrugging his shoulders.

Han Sol frowned and pondered.

— If so... — Because of her thoughts, her cheeks have become scarlet and her voice came out a little quieter. — Until... until you find the house, do you want to stay with us? — In her agitation, she clenched both her hands.

In fact, she hasn't been acting like the most sane person.

He'd certainly done a lot for her, but she'd only known this guy for a little over a couple hours. An offer like that certainly wouldn't have crossed the mind of a sane person.

'I know, but...' She wanted to get to know Kang Yu better.

She was interested in who he was and how he lived.

To be more specific, Han Sol was interested in him.

'Hmm...' Kang Yu's eyes were lit up.

An offer he couldn't refuse.

Now, for someone who has nowhere to go, a home to relax in would be a starting point for getting used to the Earth.

Her family may live in bad conditions, but it didn't matter to him.

'And money... I can make it.'

If anyone told you that the most important thing on Earth is power, know that the most important thing is money.

In a capitalist society, money is something godlike.

— Thank you, then I'll stay with you for a while.

The excitement made her face blush even more red.

Only now did she realize that what she did was really crazy.

— Han Sol, please take care of me.

(P.P.: It's a classic phrase in Korea when someone does something for you.)

— Yes, okay!

They shook hands with each other and nodded their heads.

— You can use the room my brother used to live in.

— Okay. — Kang Yu nodded and went into the room that the girl showed.

‘There are two priorities.’

He needed to earn money to live and accumulate Magi, which can be used instead of the sealed Man Ma Jung.

The several hundred powers he possessed were an effective way to win simple battles.

For an easy life in the future, he needed to increase the number of Magi that he can safely use.

‘Tae Hyun’s level is good, too.’ Even though that guy’s speed and strength was, his fighting skills weren’t, so it wasn’t hard to beat him.

But if you meet someone who’s higher in level and combat skills, Man Ma Jung’s sealed power could pose a problem.

To accumulate Magi is a necessity.

‘As well as money.’ While reading the articles on the internet, he saw an article about the Player’s ways of making money while hunting monsters.

— Han Sol, do you have a Mana stone?

— Yes. I’m at E level, so that’s not so expensive.

— Can I have a look at it?

— Of course. — She nodded her head warmly and took out a snow-white shining stone from her bag.

Kang Yu took her E-level mana stone and thought about an article from the Internet.

‘The darker the stone, the higher its owner’s level.’

It turns out that was the case with the Gate, too.

The F-gate was a snow-white gate, and the higher the level, the darker the shade.

The higher the Mana stone level, the more powerful it is, the more expensive its price on the market.

The method of income for the Player was the hunt for monsters to get Mana stones

Kang Yu, holding an E-level mana stone in his hands, closed his eyes.

He focused on reading the information inside the stone.

‘I can’t feel the Magi.’ He remembered a moment when he was devouring the energy of goblins.

Even though it was weak, the goblins’ bodies contained Magi.

He expected that the origin of goblins and mana stones were the same and that there would also be Magi in the stones, but he was wrong.

The Mana stone contained energy other than Magi. It was called “Maryok”.

(PP.: In fact, it’s just “charms”, “Mana”. But as long as the previous ones are untranslatable, this one can also be untranslatable).

‘Where do you get the Magi from then?’ When he recently used the Power of the Devourer, he could not even think that the monsters have Magi, and could not specify at the time when he took it, and now it was too late.

‘We’ll have to find out.’ That was the first task so far.

Monsters having both Magi and mana stones that could be converted into real money was an important fact.

By hunting monsters, he could achieve his two goals at once.

— Han Sol, is there a Player Support Center around here?

— No. You have to go towards Seoul.

— Yes, I see. Can you please tell me how to get there?

— Yes. I have some business at the center myself.

— And you?

— Yeah. I realized I don't have skill and power. Even if it takes time, I'd like to learn before my next trip to the gate.

There was a university in Korea that supported new players and provided safe promotion to rank 2 of level 10 as well as special skills.

However, because of the high tuition fees, low-income players like Han Sol often couldn't afford it.

But recent experiences showed that if you didn't know how to use a special skill, entering the gate was comparable to suicide.

— Hmm... — Kang Yu squinted his eyes.

'Shouldn't I help her?' With his strength, it wouldn't be difficult to help raise Han Sol's level.

Actually, her level was the higher one, as he only had fighting skills and all kinds of powers.

If he took another man hunting, it wouldn't be burdensome.

'No.' He shook his head. 'It will lower the efficiency rate.'

Maybe later. Now, considering her skills, the harm would be many times greater than the benefit.

He doesn't need a party where everyone gets in each other's way.

He had good feelings toward Han Sol, that's true.

She was the first person he met when he returned to Earth, and the first girl who prepared the kimchi jjigae he'd craved for him.

But after calculating all the losses, there was no reason to take her with him.

‘We have to work separately.’ After all, he was still a calculating person.

No. To be more precise, ten thousand years in Hell have made him calculating.

In Hell, full of strong demons, he had been a weak man at the bottom. To survive in a place like this, he had to become...

Scheming.

Of course, over time, the number of devoured demons increased and he became respected, but habits do not disappear.

‘First, I have to get my strength back.’

CHAPTER 9

THE MAGI PROJECT (1)

— Identity card has been restored.

Before going to the Players Support Center, Kang Yu headed to the county administration to get an ID. He looked at the employee with a tired look.

‘I hope I won’t have to fill out the missing person’s form.’

He was wondering if he could explain where he went missing for five years. As he thought about such fabrications, he received his ID, which the employee was holding out.

Strangely enough, although he went missing for 5 years from Earth, he was not listed as missing.

Did nobody notice my disappearance?’ Or maybe nobody even knew he existed.

With a slightly sad face, he looked at his new ID.

How lonely he’d been, how dreary he’d been.

‘I’m going to change now.’ He didn’t even think about going back to his old way of life after living like a dog for ten thousand years.

Kang Yu went outside with his new identity card and headed to the place where he and Han Sol had agreed to meet.

— Oh, Kang Yu, you came.

— Thanks for waiting.

— Well, let’s go!

Han Sol started walking ahead, while Kang Yu trailed behind.

[The next station is Seoul, Seoul Station]

— Kang Yu, we're here.

He didn't have the strength to answer Han Sol.

— Ohh! — Kang Yu made a delighted exclamation. He was gawking at the huge masses of people moving around the station.

'This is a city.' The place where Han Sol lived could hardly be called a city, but this place was very different.

Kang Yu stepped out after Han Sol and looked around again.

The smell of smoke. The smell of smoke. The mist.

The skyscrapers rising up into the sky and the unchangeable asphalt road.

People hurrying around to attend whatever business they had.

— I'm back.

When he saw the familiar sight of busy city life, he came to realize that he really came back to Earth.

— That's the support center over there, Kang Yu.

— Oh, I see. — Kang Yu looked in the direction Han Sol pointed at.

Kang Yu grinned when he looked at the place called the Players' Support Center.

'Incheon Airport*?'

*(*P.P.: The largest airport in the country)*

The building was so large that it could only be compared to the airport.

It's unbelievable that they built a building this size in the heart of the city. It's scary to

even imagine how much money must have been invested in it.

‘Did Players become this important to society?’

Well, it’s possible if they’re considered lifesavers.

— Well, I’m going to take a basic level class. The lectures will probably start today, so I might finish late.

— Yeah, I’ll see you at home.

— Yeah. — She waved, and went off to her class.

After splitting up with Han Sol, Kang Yu headed for the registration department.

The search didn’t take long.

An employee who glanced at the ID card several times said automatically:

— Go to the test room.

— Yes, thank you.

Kang Yu took the coupon that he had been given and went back in the right direction.

There were some very excited guys sitting in front of the test room.

— Hello? Mom? I’m in front of the test room right now. Yeah, I’ll get confirmation and go to class. You just wait – your son will succeed and get offers from the best guilds.

— Excuse me, is there anybody here with special powers of rank one?

— I have level D.

— Wow, that’s not bad. You didn’t happen to come here to get level B rank 2, did you?

— Ha, but I’m not worth anything compared to players like Baek Kang Hyun and Chae Young-ju.

— Hey, they say they were at level S when they got rank 1. You can’t compare them to

us, of course.

— What about... Nam Gi Tae? Have you heard of him?

— With rank 5, he got S-level power and was immediately scouted by the guilds.

— Yes, I envy him. I can't even dream about rank 1 or 2. But if I get...

— Life will play with new colors.

Kang Yu was in the waiting room listening to their conversation.

'So it's very important to have a special skill level.'

In fact, the Player class was determined by the level of special skill.

The skill level plays a particularly important role at a low level.

Because it was difficult for players with a low level of special skill to raise their level, they no longer felt like it was a special skill.

The higher the level, the more likely it was to obtain a high-level specialty, but the low-level players do not have this chance.

— Hmm... — Kang Yu opened his status window to check the special skill.

[Special skill ??? rank]

He couldn't determine the level of his Devourer Power.

'Maybe it's out of their league.' That would make sense.

A feature of level S. Above the SS level, how strong the SSS level is, Kang Yu couldn't even imagine, but nothing could compare to the Devourer's Power.

'That would be cheating.' A powerful force that develops itself.

Kang Yu had used it for a long time, and by absorbing demons, it reached a high level.

'But not now.'

Kang Yu wasn't really worried.

Even if the Devourer's Power was sealed, he could still use Magi, which only needed to be replenished.

If he replenished the Magi, it wouldn't be a problem to bring back the old powers.

'What if I start using the Players' powers?' Kang Yu was thinking about using more than just his powers from the past.

— Kang Yu.

— Yes.

Kang Yu followed the voice that called him to the test room.

Inside, a snow-white crystal sat there. The players each put their hands on it, appearing very worried.

A woman with round glasses came up to Kang Yu.

— You should put your hands here. When it grasps your strength, the stone will be colored in the color of your special skill.

— And how will it change?

— Just like the Gate. The higher the level, the darker the color.

Kang Yu nodded lightly.

'I wonder what shade it will become.' His level was beyond what it could measure. He didn't know what to expect.

'Well, whatever it is will be whatever it is.' He wasn't the kind of guy to hide his power just to avoid attracting attention.

On the contrary, it's better to know your level as it is.

He didn't hesitate putting his hands on a rock.

— You have a special strength of level F, — said the woman in an ordinary voice, looking at the stone which barely changed in color, and wrote something down on a piece of paper that she was holding in her hands.

Kang Yu shook his head in disbelief as the result was very different from what he expected.

‘Because the power is sealed?’ That’s something he wouldn’t know.

It’s also possible that his Power was just too great and the stone couldn’t measure it.

‘Well, there’s nothing you can do about it.’ He couldn’t change the results.

If they brought in monsters for Players to defeat, he could’ve easily shown his real level.

— First, you get the player’s level E certificate. You are free to go to the level E Gate and below. To visit a higher level gate, you must write an application to accept liability.

— What can I do to increase the level?

— If you complete the basic training, you will receive level D. Then, you’ll get the Mana stone.

— I see.

— Come to the counter, we’ll prepare your ID. At the same time, you can apply for the basic level education if you’re going to study.

— No, thank you. — He didn’t even think about getting basic knowledge.

Even now, he could lay down an army of monsters with just a tiny amount of Magi.

‘It’s a waste of time.’ Learning basic combat behaviour was pointless.

He’d studied it for ten thousand years, so going to school would be a waste of time and money.

Kang Yu turned around and left the test room.

The woman wearing round glasses looked at the passing guy and sighed.

‘Another guy with no special skills.’ Strange as it may seem, F-rank 1 players were hardly found.

Usually, it was level E, and rarely, with any luck, level D.

‘And he doesn’t want to be trained either.’

It was clear that he was disappointed with the level, but if he was not trained, the result would be obvious.

‘He’s dead as soon as he enters the gate.’

Players of level F aren’t taken into any of the guilds.

Therefore, they go to the Gate alone to raise their rank faster, but in the end, they simply die.

— Eh... — she sighs again.

It’s better not to become a Player if you get an F level.

It’s better to live like a normal person by going to work and getting paid every month. Even if it’s low pay, it’s better than dying a dog’s death.

— Huh? — Her gaze fell on the crystal that Kang Yu just walked away from. — What is that?

His stone suddenly started to turn dark. From snow-white to grey, from grey to dark grey.

And then.

It became almost black.

— Did it break down or something? — It’s the first time a crystal stone changed color without anyone touching it.

She didn’t know what was going on, she just watched.

It changed to totally black, and then the stone cracked.

The stone that Kang Yu had touched before was shattered into tiny pieces.

— It's definitely broken... — A woman just looked at the shards in despair.

He couldn't have such a black special ability.

Even the last time when Baek Kang Hyun got an S level, all he had been was dark gray.

This was not dark gray, but really black.

That had never happened.

— Next test subject, please wait!

She took the broken stone and left the office.

CHAPTER 10

THE MAGI PROJECT (2)

— We're looking for support! Only those whose level is above D rank are accepted!

— Tank? No tank?

— I'm a robber.

— Oh, sorry, stay back.

The E level Gate was near Seoul.

A huge number of people gathered around the gate in the turmoil, searching for a party.

'What's wrong with robbers?' Kang Yu had heard this kind of conversation before, so he thought about it.

But it seems that everyone has a certain order to collect party members.

'Well, I don't care.' He, as someone who was going to hunt on his own, didn't give a damn about chattering around.

Kang Yu gave the employee his just received Player ID.

— It's been confirmed. —

There was another person in uniform. It seemed to him that they would check his ID again, so he gave it.

Kang Yu thought that the remnants of the Power of Illusion from last time might still act on the man, and if he just showed him his hand, he would still miss it. So when he showed his ID, he just moved on.

The surrounding air trembled.

‘I don’t like this feeling.’ Every time, it reminded him of the feeling of throwing himself in Hell’s Nine Thousandth Circle.

When Kang Yu entered the Gate, the first thing he wanted to do was go into the forest to hunt monsters.

— Sir, are you alone? — There was a kind voice addressing Kang Yu.

He turned towards the source of the sound and saw the shield that was hiding the young man and apparently his flock.

He was over two meters tall and his body was made up of cubes.

‘Bear or something?’ It was definitely a human, but he looked like a predatory animal.

— Yes, I am.

— Are you going hunting alone?

Kang Yu nodded lightly.

The guy spat and continued:

— You’re advancing to the second rank?

— I’m not.

— It seems like you haven’t gone through basic training either. Do you have rank F? If so, it’s better not hunting on your own. Even though goblins are small, and they look flimsy, they’re monsters, — he said with anxiety in his voice.

— If you can’t find a party, you can join us for a while to see what these monsters look like.

— Hey, Dae Su! Let him figure it out for himself!

— That’s right, Dae Su! If he’s at level F, he won’t do us any good. Let him go.

— No! Get into your position, — the guy shouted rudely.

In this party he obviously had power; all at once everyone quieted down and each of them trembled.

— It'll save your life. We share everything equally, so don't worry about the stones. Join us.

— Just don't let him get in the way...

All of Dae Su's party members clicked their tongue together when they heard the phrase that they would have to share the stones with him.

Dae Su felt a little depressed and looked at his buddies and then turned his gaze to Kang Yu.

— My name is Kang Dae Su. What's your name?

— Oh Kang Yu.

— You can refer to me informally as "you", I'm only twenty-four.

'Don't lie.' Of course, if you hear something like that from a big guy who looks more than 30, you'd think it's a lie.

— Huh? Don't you believe it? Look at this! I was born in zero, I'm Kang Dae Su! — A guy shouted, showing his ID. This kind of situation had happened before, and more than once.

'Huh? Are you seriously saying that's the face of a 20-year-old?' Kang Yu was surprised to learn this.

'What the hell?' Kang Yu grinned and cocked his head.

— So use the word 'you.'

— Heh heh, our guy's fast. Isn't it burdensome? You're going to do an experiment at the party?

— Thank you for the offer, but I'm not recklessly joining the party. — Kang Yu answered coldly.

Dae Su's response to the harsh answer was sullen and spitting.

— Well, I can't help it. But you have to be careful. Especially beware of large brown goblins. You see them, you run. Hobgoblin is the boss.

— Thank you for the useful information.

— Good luck! — Dae Su and his Party stepped back and fled into the forest.

Kang Yu looked at their tracks and smiled a little:

— Normal guys, even though their appearance was unusual, but Dae Su even suggested splitting up the stones.

Kang Yu was impressed.

If he had really been an F-rank player, that would have been a terrific start.

— Well, it's time. — He went for an even lighter gait.

When he went deep enough into the dark forest, he finally met a goblin.

It yelled. Well, it turned out there were five of them, and they all screamed at once.

A black blade appeared from Kang Yu's left wrist.

Kang Yu, with the precision and agility of a wild beast, rushed towards the goblins.

Usually, goblins were seen as a disgusting sight, but Kang Yu saw these disgusting creatures as a way to accumulate Magi.

In a few moves, he slashed at their necks, and their heads fell off from their shoulders.

Last time, he had chopped ten at once, and this time there were only five of them. He didn't even waste any power.

— As expected, it was easy.

He had a feeling of lightness at heart.

So he put a blade in the last goblin.

His head fell to the ground, paired with his last growl.

[You successfully destroyed a level E monster]

[Experience points increased]

[You've advanced to level 4]

[Magi raised by 1 unit]

'My level increased!' Kang Yu's eyes sparkled.

He hadn't cared at all about his level the first time around. Now, he thought differently.

Kang Yu opened the status window.

[Status Window]

Player's name: Oh Kang Yu

Level: 4 [1 rank]

Rank 1 Feature: The Power of the Devourer (Rank: ???).

Special skills are currently sealed.

Strength: 9

Vitality: 10

Physical ability: 8

Maryok: 0

Magi: 14

Intellect: 8

Wisdom: 7

‘Amazing.’ No matter how many times he looked at the status window, he found it amazing.

‘My Magi really is getting better.’

But Man Ma Jung was still sealed.

‘It turns out that you can accumulate Magi by raising your level.’ That was one more reason to catch monsters.

Kang Yu approached the dead bodies of beheaded monsters.

‘The fact that there is no Magi in the mana stone, I’ve checked it already.’ It was necessary to find out where monsters kept their Magi.

— Devourment.

As soon as he got close to the bodies, the Devourer’s Power woke up.

The black smoke that rose from his body completely enveloped the goblins.

There was the terrifying sound of broken bones and torn flesh.

He poured out the smoke on everything except on Mana stones on purpose, leaving them untouched.

Like last time, there was very little Magi in the bodies of goblins.

Kang Yu smoothly closed his eyes to find where the Magi came from.

It didn’t take much time to find the source.

‘The whole body.’

To be more precise, the soul that’s in the body.

Each body that was killed had a soul.

That's where the Magi were circulating.

'In that case... You can always get the Magi from fresh bodies. Okay.'

The bodies could bring not only Magi but mana stones that could be sold.

After drawing out all the energy from them, Kang Yu picked up one Level E mana stone and put it in his bag.

'It looks like I ate chicken and left only bones.' Yes, there's only Mana stone left. 'Oh, I only thought about the chicken, and immediately I became hungry.'

He was so hungry, he was drooling.

Kimchi jjigae is delicious, of course, but while thinking about the chicken, he wanted to eat chicken.

'The chicken is panned... Cold beer...' Even imagining a picture like that gave him the chills.

'Should we go now?' He could hardly resist the urge to eat chicken. Kang Yu shook his head to drive that feeling away...

'Hunting first!' He's only at the beginning of his Magi collection project.

He was crazy about eating chicken, but he'd only caught five monsters, he couldn't go back yet.

'Later, I have to go with Han Sol to get some chicken.' He trudged deeper into the forest as he bit his lip.

'That's...' In the middle of the forest, there was a carelessly built house made of trees and leaves.

Kang Yu, interested, went towards the house.

A few dozen goblins were wandering next to the house.

It was a monster shelter.

This was the number one place everyone was told to avoid when they first entered the gate.

Because in a place with a high concentration of monsters, the probability of meeting the boss increases several times.

And if approached incorrectly, it could lead to the destruction of an entire party.

However.

— What a gift! — Kang Yu shouted, looking at several dozen goblins.

The place that terrifies newcomers was a gold mine for him.

‘Great.’ This meant he could collect a lot of Magi and mana stones without wandering too far.

Magi to Magi, mana stones to money.

He was already imagining selling the mana stones.

‘Wonderful.’ Of course, if there was money, he could buy anything he wanted.

And he had only one desire at the moment.

— Let’s go eat some chicken, whoo! — Kang Yu screamed and threw himself at the monsters. — Regular chicken and chicken in sour-sweet sauce, 50-50! And bigger radishes! — He flew towards the goblins, swinging his black blade, and imagined himself standing on the counter to pay for the chicken.

CHAPTER 11

THE MAGI PROJECT (3)

— Heh. — Kang Yu grinned.

He was surrounded by the dead bodies of more than a dozen goblins.

— Phew. — The guy took a deep breath and shrugged his shoulders.

He hid the blade, which was supported by Magi's power.

'The more there are, the harder it is.' Kang Yu, rushing into the fight with the chicken screams, hadn't considered his strength one bit.

Firstly, there were a lot of them. Second, they moved so chaotically that it was difficult to choose a target.

And most importantly, his Man Ma Jung was sealed, without which his Powers were negligible.

If he hadn't used his physical strength, the Magi would only have had enough to start the fight.

When he dealt with the last five monsters, he barely had enough Magi to pierce them with a blade.

'And yet...' Kang Yu looked at the mountain of corpses again and smiled.

'I caught a lot of them.' Even though he had suffered, the catch wasn't bad. 'And my level went up, too.'

He alone defeated the lair of monsters, raising his level from 4 to 8.

'Except Magi's points didn't go up a lot.' Every time he leveled up, it only increased by 1~3 points.

Luck was not on his side. Or perhaps there was a rule of raising abilities that he was unaware of.

— Well, I'll raise the Magi with the Devourer's Power.

It was likely that any other player would be very upset if he didn't get the necessary skeleton raise, but that's not what he cared about.

Because he had a special power to promote Magi.

The Power of the Devourer.

The black smoke coming from his body wrapped everything around him.

He began to devour the energy of the surrounding monsters with special effort.

If the Magi was on a better level, he could make full use of the Devourer's power.

It may seem that this power is necessary only for nibbling on the bones and pulling energy, but in reality, it is not.

Over time, when enough Magi is gained, the Devourer acquires various techniques that can help in becoming stronger.

And since Kang Yu has used the Power for at least ten thousand years, he was confident in his skills.

'Unfortunately, it's not enough to raise my Magi yet.' Kang Yu looked at the remaining corpses with sadness.

[Magi promoted by 2 units]

'Okay.' Despite only a slight rise in Magi, Kang Yu felt that power and smiled a little.

It felt similar to his first days in Hell, when he was saving energy bit by bit.

At that time, he was also catching the weakest demons and killing them to accumulate Magi.

'Still, it's a little different now.' He hadn't known what to do at that time.

He'd acted on the instinct of self-preservation, for the most part.

Things were different now.

This time, he knew exactly how to become stronger and raise his level in the shortest and most precise ways.

It was just like replaying a game you've already beaten.

Comparing himself from the past to now, he had definitely become faster, stronger, and more stable.

'I have 16 Magi units now.' He certainly didn't know how many normal Players have at this level, but 16 was definitely not enough for him.

'It's time to get started.' Kang Yu sat down on the hut belonging to the newly exterminated goblin crowd, trying to recover his strength.

These were only goblins, but with Magi's help, he'd be able to go to a higher level gate soon.

When that happens, the process of accumulating the Magi will go faster. And it'd take less time to recover.

'It's not only goblins that have Magi, right?' Kang Yu, after returning to Earth, hadn't seen any monsters aside from goblins so far, which worried him. But the probability of that should be extremely low.

— Huh? — Kang Yu, lost in his thoughts, heard a rustling noise, and then a loud growling.

Kang Yu squinted, noticing the sounds were different from goblins, and he turned to the noise source.

There was a large, brown, healthy goblin between the trees.

Compared to ordinary goblins, which were about a meter and a half tall, this one was huge, about two meters high.

Kang Yu remembered Dae Su's warning.

‘So this is what a hobgoblin looks like.’ Kang Yu had wondered why there was no boss in the village. Apparently, he had been away.

‘Thank God.’ Kang Yu didn’t even think about how strong the boss could be. He had just put down a few dozen goblins. How much harder could the boss possibly be?

His Magi was gradually recovering, and he drew out his black blade.

When the Hobgoblin saw that his hideout had been crushed, he roared at Kang Yu.

In his hands, unlike the simple goblins with their crooked swords, he had a real dagger.

‘Maryok?’ The power in the hobgoblin’s dagger was supported by a small amount of Maryok.

‘Can monsters use that power too?’ Not only did they possess mana stones, they seemed to know how to use the power contained in them as well.

Kang Yu raised his left hand and propped up his blade to repel a hobgoblin attack.

But with a sound like an explosion, he was sent flying backwards.

‘Covering the front is still difficult.’

The Maryok imprisoned in the dagger was not the problem. Magi was a stronger power than Maryok, so it certainly could not have caused him to fly back.

The reason he was thrown back was the elementary difference in body structure. Specifically, the difference in musculature.

The hobgoblin had a huge body, over two meters in height, and not only beefy but also supported by the Magi. It would be hard to deal with him like that.

‘So this is how it is.’ Kang Yu was intrigued by the battle.

He wasn’t surprised that he was thrown back.

Kang Yu had long been used to unequal battles.

Battles in which he had the physical advantage could be counted on his fingers.

The hobgoblin yelled again and, in a fit of rage, threw himself at the young man.

Monsters also have emotions, and seeing his house in a defeated state with a field of dead subordinates ignited anger and hatred.

Looking at the hobgoblin with no protective gear and blinded by rage, Kang Yu smiled.

‘This is a chance.’ He cleverly dodged the monster’s attack and then lunged at him.

The Power of Rage.

A power that belonged to a demon named Crockell.

Crockell used this power to provoke his own rage, thus giving himself more power.

Kang Yu wasn’t going to use this force on himself but on the hobgoblin.

Then, the hobgoblin’s movements will become even faster and the power in the dagger will grow.

If someone were to look at his actions, they wouldn’t have understood it.

It was one of those buffs that should be used on the enemy.

It wasn’t a buff...

Kang Yu looked at the hobgoblin with an icy gaze, who, affected by the Power, was even angrier than before.

And yes, his strength had really increased.

But the important thing is.

Kang Yu could easily avoid all of the hobgoblin’s reckless attacks.

Most importantly, Kang Yu could predict what the hobgoblin was going to do and how he was going to proceed.

That was the real curse.

Kang Yu has never used this ability on himself.

It was only in comic books where rage created strength.

In fact, under the influence of the Power of Rage, all thoughts become obscured by anger, and movements become chaotic and simple.

Therefore, inflicting rage on himself for strength in this situation would not make any sense.

Now that the hobgoblin had lost all rationality, he was like an open book for Kang Yu.

It doesn't matter how strong you are if you can't make good use of your strength.

'He's coming.'

When the goblin roared out, he swung his dagger.

He'd finally lost his mind.

Kang Yu bent over and avoided being struck on his waist, then stabbed the dagger in the hobgoblin's knee.

The hobgoblin screamed like a lunatic and crashed onto the ground.

Even when he fell, he tried to swing at Kang Yu's side.

However, he wasn't able to do much damage when he was on the ground.

The only thing he could do and was capable of doing was to increase his own wound.

Kang Yu bent down slightly to the goblin and slit his throat with the black blade.

The goblin with the slit throat twisted around some more before his movements ceased.

— Phew. — Kang Yu took a deep breath to gather his strength and leaned forward a little to check the body.

'It's a shame that there's almost no Magi left either.' It was hard to fight like this because

all he had to do before was wave his hand.

‘I need to save up Magi as soon as possible.’

With a click of his tongue, Kang Yu gazed at the monster’s body while he was waiting.

‘How much Magi will he give me?’ Since all goblins weren’t very ‘abundant’ in this element, there wasn’t much to hope for.

It’s like they say, with a thread from all over the world makes a shirt for the naked. But in fact, a thread is still just a thread.

Kang Yu, hoping that the hobgoblin, like the boss, will have a little more Magi, brought his hand forward.

At that moment, the familiar sound of a bell was heard above his ear.

[You defeated the hobgoblin shelter alone!]

[Bonus points increase by 150%]

[Level C boss successfully destroyed]

[Level up by 3]

[On level 10, you can be promoted to rank 2].

[You gained a special ability of rank 2]

CHAPTER 12

PROMOTION (1)

There were many status window messages that Kang Yu was looking at with interest.

‘Special Ability of the second rank...’ Kang Yu opened the main status window to see if a new ability had appeared.

[Rank 2 Special Ability: Overwhelming Hunger. (Class: C)]

Result: Obtaining more Magi when using Devourer’s Power.

‘It’s...’ Kang Yu’s eyes shone.

And it wasn’t because he got a high class Power. High or low rank, it didn’t matter to him.

What was important was that the ability he just gained will help him accumulate Magi several times faster.

‘This is great.’ Kang Yu, happy with his new ability, smiled joyfully.

He’d acquired his first ability, the Power of the Devourer, when he went to Hell. And he obtained his second ability just now. It felt very different now.

Each time he increases his level from now on, thanks to the new ability, he would be able to improve different abilities.

‘I have to become stronger as soon as possible.’ Kang Yu, without noticing it, continued to smile as his interest in the situation grew.

— Well, I should check the effectiveness of the new power, — Kang Yu said with a childlike voice and put his hand over the hobgoblin’s body.

The black smoke immediately released and wrapped up the body.

‘The mist is thicker.’

Was this one of the effects of the new ability?

And the mist, meanwhile, became thicker and thicker until the whole body was covered in a veil.

As expected, the hobgoblin boss contained several times more Magi than the other goblins.

As Kang Yu drew out almost all the energy, a blue window came up before his eyes.

[Activating ability: overwhelming sense of hunger]

[More Magi will be devoured]

— Ha. — With the message that came up, the number of Magi drawn out of the hobgoblin increased.

It increased by about ten or twenty percent more.

Even if it was a small number, if you think of this Magi as a free bonus that might not have been there, 10~20% didn’t seem to be such a small number.

‘The more Magi a monster has, the more extra power I can get,’ Kang Yu concluded.

He’d have to catch higher-level monsters if collection increased not by an absolute value, but by a percentage.

Another message came up.

[Magi increased by 3 units]

The amount of Magi he received from just one hobgoblin was greater than the amount of Magi he’d received from a few dozen goblins.

Of course, this time a special power was also involved, but even in this case, there was a difference with ordinary monsters.

‘I should just hunt high-class monsters.’ If the monsters were weaker, he’d need to

defeat a pile of them to get a lot of Magi, but he could earn it more efficiently by finishing off larger monsters.

‘I’ve heard that the more the ability grows, the harder it is to raise it.’ The same could be said for the Player level.

Although he had quickly jumped from rank 1 to 2, it would take more time to raise his level from 10 to 11.

The fact that Kang Yu had been able to raise his Magi by 3 units from fighting the hobgoblin was promising.

Kang Yu looked at the 19 units of Magi he’d obtained after only hunting for one day, and smiled.

‘Should I check it once?’ Compared to before attacking the village, he had five units more of Magi. ‘I wonder how much Magi I will feel now?’

Kang Yu lightly closed his eyes and started ‘going through’ the Magi inside him.

— Huh? — His lips curled into a frown.

There were 14 units before, and now 19, so his Magi should be 1.3 times stronger.

At best, the amount could have doubled with the additional units.

However...

‘It’s three times as strong...’ The strength of the Magi rushing through his body surpassed Kang Yu’s expectations.

His Magi only increased by 5 units, so what was the reason behind this mysterious strength?

Kang Yu knew better than to rejoice thoughtlessly at a sudden increase in strength.

Power appearing out of nowhere was the same as a bomb ready to explode at any moment. While it was good to be optimistic about it, it could be dangerous in this situation.

Kang Yu returned to his seat, sat down, and focused on thinking.

It wasn't until a couple of minutes later that he realized the reason for the sudden jump in power.

'The force that sealed Man Ma Jung is weakening.' The unknown force that sealed Man Ma Jung was becoming weaker, causing a small amount of his Magi to spill out. Of course, this amount was hardly enough reason to smile, but compared to the moment he first returned to Earth, this seeping Magi was quite a lot.

'I wonder if this is related to the level promotion.' After all, Kang Yu had already reached level 10.

He'd attained second rank after finishing the hobgoblin, crossing the level 10 bar.

Nothing else had happened, so that was the most likely reason.

'I wonder, with every promotion, will the force that seals Man Ma Jung grow weaker?' Kang Yu's eyes were sparkling with new colors.

If that was the case, all he'd have to do was get to a certain level and his power would return in its entirety.

— Hmm... — To confirm the theory, he would need to get to level 20 and obtain rank 3.

'I need to get to a high-level gate.' It would be difficult to continue raising his level by only fighting goblins.

Kang Yu picked up the mana stone that was lying on the ground and stuffed it in his bag before heading towards the exit.

To go to a high-level gate, you need to upgrade your Player class. And to upgrade Player class, you have to sell mana stones in large quantities.

'I killed the boss so my class will definitely upgrade.' Kang Yu glanced at the Level C mana stone from the hobgoblin. Compared to the other level E stones, it had a murkier shade.

He was able to handle more than a dozen goblins and a hobgoblin alone, so it was impossible for his class not to rise.

Kang Yu, with a bag full of mana stones, stepped out of the Gate.

Compared to before entering the Gate, Kang Yu now felt lighter in his body, likely due to the increased number of Magi.

‘With so much Magi, I should be able to use more of my powers.’ Realizing this, his mood improved.

Using his Acceleration Power, he quickly arrived at where the mana stones were exchanged.

— Swap all of this for money, please. And give me a salesman’s certificate.

The man looked frightened at how many stones Kang Yu had just thrown out.

— You have 61 Level E Mana stones and one Level C Mana stone.

— How much do I get for each piece?

— With tax deductions, a Level E mana stone costs 36,000 won and a Level C mana stone costs 2,570,000 won.

(P.O.: 1000₩=0.83 USD)

— Wow.

It turns out he’d made almost 5,000,000 won today.

If he went to a higher level gate, he could earn even more.

This was probably one of the reasons why the Players are getting a lot of attention.

— Player ID, please.

— Here you go.

— Um. — The face of the man who looked at the ID turned into a frown. — Present the IDs of the men you hunted with at the parade.

He was convinced that a level E player couldn’t get that many stones all alone.

— They weren't any.

— What?

— I was hunting alone.

— You're telling me you collected all this on your own?

Looking at the baffled face of an employee, Kang Yu nodded quietly.

The employee couldn't believe it, gawking at the mountain of stones on his desk and at Kang Yu's.

For an E-level player to collect that many Mana stones alone? That was unthinkable.

'He also caught a boss.' The level C stone on his table signified that the guy killed the main monster.

'Somebody must have helped him after all.' There were times when rich Players skipped training and had a personal assistant assigned to help them.

'But it doesn't look like that.' Kang Yu was dressed too poorly and didn't have any special equipment nor weapons.

Usually, when Players received help, they possessed high-level items.

'Maybe he's hiding his noble origins?' It wasn't like a player with such a low level could hunt at a level E gate alone.

'Whatever, I'll stay out of it.' He was an educated and polite employee, after all.

— Okay. Would you like to get cash or withdraw it to your bank account? You can receive it in cash as long as it's less than 1 billion won.

— Cash, please. — Kang Yu felt that the employee didn't believe what he said about hunting alone, but he didn't mind.

After a while, the employee returned to Kang Yu with a sum of 4,766,000 won in cash.

Kang Yu left upon receiving the money.

‘The first thing I need to do is buy a phone.’ It would be necessary to get back to a normal life.

Kang Yu went to a branch that he recognized and bought a phone. He used it immediately to call Han Sol, who he’d parted with at the Player Support Centre.

— Hello?

— Han Sol? This is Kang Yu.

— Ah, you found your phone.

— Yes, I did.

— From now on, be more careful with it. Where are you now?

— It’s not far from where the mana stones are exchanged.

— Are you going straight home?

— I have to stop by somewhere, but it would be nice to go there together, what do you think?

— With me? — Her voice trembled with surprise. — Where do you want to go?

— Han Sol.

— Yes?

Kang Yu’s voice was so serious that Han Sol answered anxiously.

It seemed like he was about to say something very important.

With great sincerity, Kang Yu said:

— Let’s go get some chicken.

CHAPTER 13

PROMOTION (2)

Kang Yu had drunk half a liter of beer when his body began to shiver.

The beer soothed his body like moisture being absorbed into earth after a long drought.

‘Yes, this is it!’ He bobbed his head up and down to express how delicious it tasted.

Chicken and beer.

It was the best combination he’d only dreamed of having in Hell.

— Is it good?

— Yes. It’s perfect.

— Hmm? — Han Sol squinted at Kang Yu eating the chicken and continued with a slightly offended voice: — Even better than my kimchi jjigae? —

She knew it was unreasonable to feel jealous.

But her emotions were buzzing as she watched Kang Yu gulp down the chicken in such a hurry.

— It’s... — There was uncertainty in Kang Yu’s eyes.

The chicken or kimchi jjigae.

He couldn’t choose between them.

— Your kimchi jjigae, of course, tastes better... — Kang Yu uttered after much consideration.

Chicken may be delicious, but it couldn’t overwhelm his passionate love for kimchi jjigae.

— Hmm. Really? — Han Sol became satisfied at Kang Yu's answer. She smiled inconspicuously. — Kang Yu, you're a little weird. —

During the fight with Tae Hyun, she thought he was rude, even predatory.

Normally, he behaved calmly and impartially.

And when he ate, he looked like a little innocent child.

'Strange,' she couldn't find another word.

It was hard for her to hide her interest in Kang Yu.

— Kang Yu... Do you have any friends or family?

She thought about meeting the people around Kang Yu and listening to stories about him.

Kang Yu quietly took a sip of beer.

— I don't.

— What?

— I have no friends or family.

He'd spent his whole life alone.

His parents had abandoned him at birth, and after he left the orphanage, he'd been so busy that he couldn't even think about friends.

In those difficult moments, the only reason to continue living was to eat delicious food.

But at some point, even before he went to Hell, food stopped bringing him pleasure. That was when he decided to commit suicide.

— In that case, then, at the level E Gate...

— One day. — Kang Yu cut her off and calmly looked Han Sol in the eyes.— One day, I'll explain everything. —

It was too soon to tell her everything now. Besides, his story would be hard to believe, and Kang Yu had no desire to tell it now.

— Yes... Okay. — Han Sol smiled sadly and nodded. — Kang Yu, I'll believe you.—

— Thank you. — He nodded, took out an envelope from his pocket and gave it to Han Sol.

— Is that...?

— It's the money left over from buying my phone. It's about 300,000 won.

— Why do you need...

— First, I'm staying at your house. You can consider it rent.

— Oh, no! I can't accept this! — Han Sol waved her head vigorously.

She already owed him her life, and she couldn't possibly accept money from him under the pretext of living expenses.

— Basic Player education is expensive. It seems difficult for you to pay for it.

— But...

— Don't think about it, just take it. Besides, I get to eat your delicious food every day. Consider it as food expense, then, if not rent.

Objectively speaking, Han Sol's cooking skills are amazing.

If there weren't enough ingredients, she wouldn't be able to develop her skills, which Kang Yu wouldn't be happy about.

— Thank you, Kang Yu.

It seemed like she was ready to cry when she finally accepted the envelope.

She was worried that it would be very hard to gather money this month, so the envelope Kang Yu offered could be compared to the long-awaited rain during the drought.

— Then, once I buy the meat, I'll make an even better kimchi jjigae tomorrow. It will taste even better.— Han Sol smiled gently and put the envelope in her bag.

— Ooh! — When kimchi jjigae was mentioned, Kang Yu's eyes shone.

They weren't just words to him, they were words that stirred his very soul.

Kang Yu's body shuddered and he clenched his hands into fists.

As expected, Han Sol was just like an angel. Delicious kimchi jjigae every day.

'Let's spend our whole lives together!'

Kang Yu's consciousness painted a colorful flower garden. And among the flowers, Han Sol was there, with white wings and a clear smile. And next to it, there was kimchi jjigae blossoming.

What an ironic situation: a demon dreaming of an angel and kimchi jjigae.

If she knew what was going on in his head now, she would definitely be shocked by such chaotic thoughts.

— Oh, by the way, Han Sol.

— Oh, yeah?

— Isn't there a Level D Gate around here?

— Hmm... there are some, — replied the girl, thinking of their whereabouts.

— What kind of monsters are there?

— I've never been there, but they say it's where the Lizardmen live.

— Lizardmen... are creatures that appear in fantasy novels.

'I should try to go tomorrow,' Kang Yu thought, so he continued:

— Do you have any information about Lizardmen? What are their habits or weaknesses?

If it was a D-level monster, you can't go without preparation.

He was confident in his abilities, but this was not the time to brag.

When overconfident, the body relaxes, and inattention becomes more dangerous than any knife.

Kang Yu, when he thought he was weak, had been able to put the vigilance of thousands of demons to sleep and then kill them.

If he had no information about a demon, there was nothing he could do. It would be better to know his enemy well.

— Their weak spot is fire. And... I hear they're sensitive to the voices.

— Voices?

— Yes. Since they can barely see, they survive on hearing. That's why the parties that go to the Lizard are as quiet as they can be and end the hunt pretty quickly.

— Haha, that's really useful information.

'Besides, their weakness is fire.' Kang Yu could use one of his Powers thanks to the released Magi.

'It seems like the hunt will not be difficult.' He thought about collecting as many stones as he did today and smiled.

— Didn't you buy any weapons or uniforms? — She thought he was a high-class player, but his appearance didn't match the level.

— I don't have any need for anything at the moment/ — The most common weapon for him was a black blade. And for defense, he's got over a dozen Powers to spare.

He'd probably spend less Magi with his gear and it'd be more efficient, but he wasn't fighting hard enough to use anything else now.

'I can buy later.' First he wanted to stabilize his position by selling the mana stones. And then he would buy some equipment.

For now, it was important for him to raise the level.

‘I should get rank 3 as soon as possible and check if the power sealing my Man Ma Jung is really weakening.’

For other Players, it takes about two to three months to reach Rank 3, and with special forces of low levels, about six. Kang Yu wasn’t happy with that option.

He was already on a different level than the other players.

‘Tomorrow I’ll have a lizard grill.’ Kang Yu continued to munch on chicken legs, eyes shimmering.

— Hmm...

— What is it?

— I was wondering what the lizard grill would taste like.

Han Sol looked at the guy questioningly.

‘I really want to try it.’ He’d have to cut off the Lizard’s tail.

Kang Yu finished his glass of beer and called the waitress.

— Woman, bring more beer.

* * *

— Have a good hunt, Kang Yu.

— And you have a good training.

— Ha, I’ll soon get two ranks and be a good Player, like you! — Han Sol answered cheerfully, clenching her fists.

‘That’s right, Angel.’ Kang Yu looked at Han Sol, feeling at peace.

— Well, it’s time.

Kang Yu, who received a salesman's certificate, could now demand to upgrade his class.

Thanks to that destroying the hobgoblin boss's hideout alone, he was able to get a D-level certificate.

— Rank 2 Supper has been found. A man with a special strength of class C is needed.

— Welcome to the party, we will help you get to rank 3 quickly!

— Experienced robber! Let me join your party, please!

There were much more people in front of the Level D Gate than there were in front of the Level E Gate.

This was because after completing the first training, the Players immediately received a Level D certificate.

But, of course, for those who had just been promoted to 2nd rank, hunting at a level D Gate was not an easy task. Because they didn't have the fighting skills.

That's why there are plenty of people in front of a Level D Gate to rip off newcomers.

But Kang Yu wasn't interested.

— Someone take me, a robber, into a party already! — There was a guy screaming as hard as he could, advertising himself to get into a party.

Kang Yu looked at him with sympathy and walked the other way.

He had no intentions to help that guy, and he was definitely not going to invite him.

— Look. — Someone called Kang Yu as he was about to enter the gate after passing his ID check

Kang Yu turned around. There was a young man with a dagger in front of him. Behind him, there were four other Players.

'He looks like Dae Su.' If so, he could be a good guy.

— Yes? What can I do for you?

— I think you're new, and you're not wearing any items either. Would you like to join the party? — The guy's face was covered in pimples, but he smiled nicely asking the question.

— Brother, we're going to help you level up yourself safely. — There was a very beautiful girl among the four Players who winked at Kang Yu.

If he had just returned to Earth, he would have followed that girl immediately. But now he already lives with Han Sol, whose appearance is comparable to that of a model.

That's why Kang Yu was determined:

— Thank you, I'm not interested.

— Ah, wait!

Kang Yu coldly ignored them and went to the gate.

When he walked in, the look on the face of the guy who tried to grab him changed.

— What an ignorant person. — His eyes shone with anger as he glared in the direction Kang Yu left.

CHAPTER 14

IS THAT REALLY ENOUGH? (1)

‘Level D Gate.’ Kang Yu’s face creaked over the nasty humidity in the area.

— Apparently, every gate has its own landscape. — This time the dense forests were replaced by impassable swamps.

‘Not a nice place to hunt.’ It’s not that fighting on a surface like this was difficult, but this type of terrain was not suitable for using the Blade Power.

‘Well, I’ll attack from a distance.’ His arsenal of long-range combat skills included over a hundred Powers.

He would not have the same problems as other Players who could only use the limited skills they received.

— The Power of Silence is the ability to mute the necessary sounds.

As Han Sol recommended, he ‘muted’ his steps and went in search of monsters.

‘Three Creatures.’ Kang Yu noticed some Lizardmen that were not far from him.

Lizardmen were the size of a man. They each had a spear with them, surveying the surrounding area. They looked a lot more dangerous than goblins.

‘They have bad eyesight.’

Considering their body structure, they belonged to the reptile class.

They couldn’t see well, but they could hear well, which is what they relied on while hunting.

Armed with this information in advance, Kang Yu was able to get close enough so that they didn’t even notice him.

‘Great.’ Kang Yu walked behind them, smiling.

If it was possible to attack suddenly, there was nothing difficult about hunting.

‘The Power of Hellfire.’

The power that belonged to a demon named Andras.

A high-end Power that could destroy everything around it.

There were lights dancing on Kang Yu’s right wrist. They weren’t just flames, they were the Hellfire, ready to destroy.

Kang Yu pointed his hand towards the Lizardmen.

A small light shot at the monster and, as soon as it reached the target, grew so that it covered the whole body of the Lizardman.

The three Lizardmen dumbfounded by a surprise attack raised their spears and rushed towards Kang Yu.

Effortlessly dodging their attack, he continued to watch the Hellfire do its job.

After a while, they fell to the ground with screams, losing all their vitality.

They had just been burned with Hellfire, but there were no burns on their bodies.

‘As expected of the Power of Andras.’ Unlike other fire-related skills, this one did not burn the body – it burned the life force.

This is the Power of Hellfire.

According to well-known laws, if you set something on fire, it will burn. But the Power of Andras relied on Magi.

‘It was hard to fight him.’ Kang Yu’s body got goosebumps as he recalled the fight with Andras.

If he hadn’t accumulated enough Magi by then, he’d have suffered like these monsters.

— Ugh. — This Power has always been useful.

Fire only burned around one of his hands, but Kang Yu could feel how much Magi was wasting away.

‘It’s a good thing I raised my level, otherwise it would be difficult to use this Power.’ If the force that sealed Man Ma Jung wasn’t weakening, then an easy hunt could actually tire him out.

‘If you think about it...’ Suddenly, Kang Yu thought about Tae Hyun in his head. ‘He belongs to the Andras Guild.’

Quite significant among the middle-ranking guilds, the guild, which has been the subject of so many bad rumors, suddenly coincided by name with the Power, which was now used by Kang Yu.

Well, the 72 Solomon Demons are quite popular in human circles.

Kang Yu did not know what the reason was, but most of the demon names of the Nine Thousandth Circle of Hell have long been known on Earth.

For example, the Seven Great Demons are described in the Bible as Seven Deadly Sins.

Demons living in the Nine Thousandth Circle of Hell are mentioned both in religious texts and in legends.

In fact, Andras was not very popular at the time and still did not receive much attention.

‘I must find the Magi first.’ Kang Yu sent the Devourer’s Power to the corpses.

‘As I thought, goblins aren’t the only ones who have Magi.’ A small amount of energy spilled over into him.

Expectations of the numbers were met, too. The higher the monster level, the bigger the Magi.

And there was definitely more of it in lizardmen than in goblins.

‘Of course, it is not comparable to the Magi contained in demons.’ Unlike demons that

needed Magi to maintain their strength and move, the local monsters used Marek for such needs.

Kang Yu couldn't stop thinking about the Magi contained in demons.

A notice came up before Kang Yu's eyes.

[Magi raised by 1 unit]

— Well, better than nothing.

It would be much worse if there was absolutely no way to accumulate Magi.

Kang Yu again activated the Silence Power and went on to look for monsters.

The hunting wasn't going to get any easier than this.

Use the Power of Silence to sneak up behind you and attack with the Power of Hellfire.

It was so easy that Kang Yu wondered if he was hunting at all. He used the same technique over and over, and the result was the same.

With the help of the Power of Hellfire, Kang Yu was able to slaughter three or four Lizardmen at a time, so he specifically looked for monsters that were piled up in groups.

'Who would want more work?' He had an easy way of hunting and the power to bring this plan to life.

So there was no need for another method.

'Simplicity is the right way to do this.'

Using their poor eyesight against them, he could get as close as possible and muffle the sounds of those he attacked to prevent other Lizardmen from noticing. And then he used the Hellfire to burn all their life force.

You could say that this method violated all the rules.

The dying Lizardmen tried their best to get to Kang Yu with their spears.

But no matter how hard they tried, they couldn't cut the distance.

They could only scream before falling dead.

This wasn't exactly what you'd call a 'fair' battle.

But it was Kang Yu's method.

'When was hunting ever supposed to be fair?'

Hunting is something that takes a life. This was his opportunity to buy new trophies.

There's no room for justice in this situation.

That's how the human brain works.

Thinking rudely and cruelly.

That's what Kang Yu had realized when he was in Hell.

By following his own rules, Kang Yu continued to hunt for lizardmen.

A notice came up.

[Level up by 1]

Despite the absurdity of the method, the hunting was effective.

In just a few hours, Kang Yu could climb three levels.

'The levelling is too slow.' The murder of five goblins had raised him to two or three levels. For the murder of 20 or 30 Lizardmen, his level increased by only one unit.

Not only the level, but his Magi was rising slower than before, too.

'As expected.' He'd read a study that the higher the level of the Player, the more it takes to level up.

However, if you compare Kang Yu's rate of increase with other players, it was unrealistically fast.

For regular players of rank 2, even if they were geared up, it was simply impossible to rise by 3 levels in a few hours.

It's likely that this became known, the other players will tear Kang Yu apart.

After grabbing the fallen mana stones, Kang Yu opened the status window.

[Status Window]

Player name: Oh Kang Yu

Level: 14 [1 rank]

[Rank 1 Special Ability: Devourer power (Rank: ????)]

[Rank 2 Special Ability: Overwhelming Hunger. (Rank: C)]

[Special skills are currently sealed.

Strength: 11

Vitality: 13

Physical ability: 11

Maryok: 0

Magi: 25

Intellect: 9

Wisdom: 8

Magi is at 25 units.]

For level 14, 25 units of Magi was a lot.

In addition, the 25 units do not include the Magi that belongs with the sealed Man Ma Jung.

Counting it all together, he had about 40 units.

At rank 2, he already had as much Magi as Players approaching rank 4.

‘It’s still not enough,’ Kang Yu thought, looking at the status window.

Compared to other players, he is, of course, at a high level, but compared to his original strength- the level is simply negligible.

— Hmm, — Kang Yu crossed his arms and thought.

Safety is good, but he was greedy. He wanted to collect as much Magi and experience points as possible, and as soon as possible.

— Should we hunt the crowds?

The method is dangerous, of course, but it’s been proven to be more efficient.

In the E-gate, he had quickly increased levels precisely because he attacked a group of goblins in their shelter.

— The hunting is still going well.

While Kang Yu was in doubt, a voice was heard behind him. He turned around.

Behind his back was a guy covered in pimples with four members of the group.

‘It’s this guy.’ Kang Yu’s face turned sour with a frown.

CHAPTER 15

IS THAT REALLY ENOUGH? (2)

— Cheeky face! — The man with a face full of pimples yelled out rudely.

— Be patient, Ho Jung. There have always been a lot of ignorant fools among newcomers.

— Ha. This one is a really ignorant snot, — Jong-Ho Jung repeated after the girl named So Ye Ri, and took a deep breath.

After Ho Jung finally attained rank 3 while almost dying multiple times he'd realized that he was not a 'gifted' Player.

His special power of rank 3 belonged to class C.

And his two earlier skills belonged in classes E and D.

Since the level of his special strength was not high, he could not find a higher level flock and simply settled at the D level gate.

He had already given up the idea of going higher, but the situation turned out to be such that he no longer gained any experience for killing D-level monsters.

Now the guys in the party with him either had special abilities of the lower rank or, like Ho Jung himself, could not enter the higher level gate.

* * *

'How far has he gone?' Ho Jung bit his lip and clenched his fists.

There was only one reason for such tactless entry-level Players to appear without any weapons or items. Luck.

The luck to get a special high-level ability.

— I need to teach you a lesson, — he said enviously, looking at the gate.

A special power's rank was important, but you couldn't just ignore someone older than you.

It is believed that for rank 2, a special ability of level B is high.

— Ye Ri, is this the first time we've seen him?

— Yeah, we're in there all the time. This is the first time I've seen him.

— Then it's definitely a guy with two ratings.

It makes no sense for high-class Players to go down to a low-level gate.

Because of the difference in levels, it was more difficult for them to get experience points, and the difference in the price of mana stones was great.

Sometimes new members of the guilds descend to a lower level to level up. But that ignorant newcomer had been alone, so that couldn't be the case.

— You're saying there aren't any Class A Players with special ability?

— Yes. At least not in the last month.

— Okay.

A guy with average abilities and ignorance of the rules wouldn't be a problem for them.

— We're not hunting today.

— Ho Jung...

— I've gotta teach the guy a lesson.

His group members smiled.

— Okay, great. Finally, we will have some fun.

— Yeah, it's been boring lately.

— I'm in, too.

Each of his friends were in a similar situation. Everyone had a low-level special power, and they could not all enter a higher-level gate.

Each of them was jealous of Kang Yu as much as Ho Jung.

They had plenty of experience mocking weaker players.

— Come on. — The corner of Ho Jung's lips twitched as they entered the gate.

* * *

— What? — Kang Yu asked in a cold tone, looking at Ho Jung.

Kang Yu could recognize him.

'It's that guy.' The pimple guy who offered to join his party.

Each of them looked at Kang Yu with a smile.

— Yes, we, as elders, are interested in how things are going with the newcomer, — said Ho Jung with a grin.

Kang Yu quietly smiled at such a blatant lie.

'Nice.' It wasn't hard to guess what was going on.

Just by judging the look on his face, it was easy to tell why they came and what they were going to do.

'Well, let's have some fun.'

The weak will not live.

It's the law of life for those who look down on anyone.

Destroy the weak and prove you're better. But that kind of thing is just self-comfort.

However.

There was something they were mistaken about.

‘I’m not weak.’ And he wasn’t one to silently tolerate attacks towards him.

He was a demon to all demons, one who devours all.

The corners of Kang Yu’s lips twitched and he spoke in a calm tone:

— As you can see, the hunting is going well.

— Um. — Ho Jung leaned toward Kang Yu and took a closer look at the space around him.

— Okay, you may say that, but I don’t see any bodies.

The phrase about successful hunting was not believable with the lack of bodies of lizardmen.

Kang Yu shrugged his shoulders and answered calmly:

— I’m taking a break.

— Oh, yeah? Aren’t you a little rude to talk like that to your elders?

— The fact that you’re sticking your nose in my business is annoying to me.

Ho Jung changed his face when he looked at Kang Yu’s peaceful composure.

— Oh, you ignoramus!

Although Ho Jung did not know the special ability class of his opponent, Kang Yu’s behavior made him so mad that he was ready to act.

‘Most likely it’s a Level B ability.’ If so, Kang Yu was more likely to be respected and offered invitations to guilds and parties.

Of course, there are more people who don’t possess a high-class ability, but Ho Jung was unaware of this, so he continued to be upset about the unfairness.

— Maybe I should tell you by documenting everything in writing. — Kang Yu started to boil with anger, and he rested his hands on his sides.

— Ha.

— What a bastard.

The previously quiet members of the group became agitated and grabbed their weapons.

Ho Jung put his hand out to hold back his armed comrades.

— That's enough.

— But, Ho Jung...

— Don't worry about it. We are rehabilitating this rude man, — Ho Jung said with a mocking tone.

But there was no need to dirty their own hands to rehabilitate the newbie.

'There's a better way.' There's something every newcomer fears.

— You'll regret your overconfidence.

What all newcomers fear.

The monsters.

— I'm waiting.

— Hmm. Let's see how far you'll go.

Ho Jung, looking at the fearless Kang Yu, pulled out his dagger.

He smiled and pulled out his hand with a metal wristband on it.

His team members knew what Ho Jung was up to and watched with anticipation in their eyes.

— Did you know that lizardmen are sensitive to sounds?

Kang Yu didn't answer anything.

This was information that Kang Yu knew from the beginning of the hunt.

‘That’s it.’ Kang Yu knew what Ho Jung would do now, and smiled.

A dagger, a metal wristband, and sound-sensitive lizardmen.

If you combine all these facts together, there was only one option.

Ho Jung ran the dagger over his wristlet.

The pure and the melodic sound of metal flew all over the swamp.

‘As expected.’ Kang Yu was right.

He smiled at Ho Jung’s ridiculous act.

He heard the wild screams from a herd of lizardmen.

Ho Jung gave a nasty smile and continued:

— The best means of education for beginners – monsters.

Newcomers who got used to monsters eventually become afraid of Players, not monsters.

And those who could not get used to fighting monsters continue to fear them rather than Players.

The main adversary of humanity.

Flesh-eating and blood-drinking monsters.

— So that’s what you were going to do.

— What, are you scared? — Ho Jung laughed with his heart. — Judging by the sounds, there are more than ten lizardmen rushing in here. I don’t know how many high-end special abilities you have, but can you beat them?

Kang Yu didn’t say anything.

— You don't have to worry. If we think they're about to kill you, we'll save you. You might get a little hurt, of course, but that would be a good life lesson.

Ho Jung looked at the silent Kang Yu and prepared his dagger.

The pure sound of metal flew around again. Kang Yu was quietly observing Ho Jung's actions and pressing his lips together firmly.

Ho Jung thought that Kang Yu was scared.

— Why aren't you showing off anymore?

Kang Yu didn't say anything back.

— Huh! As soon as the monster appeared, you froze in fear. — Ho Jung snickered happily.

Kang Yu, seeing this, raised the corners of his lips and said it:

— Can you handle it?

— What?

— Are you strong enough?

— What the...

Kang Yu looked at Ho Jung's confused expression and concentrated Power in both hands.

'The Power of Sound.'

It allowed every movement to be so loud that you would want to be deaf to avoid hearing those sounds.

— Ah?

— You... what did you do?

Ho Jung and his comrades have turned pale.

It's pure suicide to make noise in the lair of lizardmen.

Monster howls were heard from all sides.

Lizardmen started running towards loud noises.

— You're crazy!

The roar of the lizardmen didn't stop.

Kang Yu continued to use the Power of Sound; it seemed as if bombs were going off here and there.

— I think that'll be enough.

— You jerk!!! — Ho Jung's scream mixed with the sounds made by Kang Yu's Power.

Even if he was acting crazy, he wasn't the real nut job here.

CHAPTER 16

IS THAT REALLY ENOUGH? (3)

Ho Jun's wail flew across the swamp, blending in with the wild roar of lizardmen responding to the Power of Sound issued by Kang Yu.

'Psycho.' Although he also intentionally made sounds to lure out monsters, what Kang Yu was doing was incomparable to what Ho Jung did.

If he was just throwing wood at a burning house, Kang Yu was pouring a can of gasoline.

— Run! — Ho Jung hurriedly shouted to his comrades.

Their faces turned pale as they became confused with panic, looking through all the possible options to overcome this situation.

Kang Yu slowly enjoyed the expressions on their faces.

— Where will you run to?

They were surrounded by lizardmen from all sides.

Escaping just wasn't possible.

Ho Jung prepared his dagger and shouted angrily:

— Do you think you can get away with doing this? Ah? You're going to kill us all!

— Die with you? No. Only you will die here.

— Ha! Think you'll survive surrounded by so many monsters? — Ho Jung laughed.

The number of lizardmen running in their direction was approaching a hundred.

This was a situation where Ho Jung has to give his life for his comrades.

There was absolutely no way for a player of rank 2 to survive under attack by so many lizardmen.

— You asked me just now if I knew they could easily catch sounds, — Kang Yu said with a smile and looked at Ho Jung.

Kang Yu's smile made Ho Jung's body shake.

— Well, I know very well about that, too.

Kang Yu used the Power of Silence and took some easy steps.

Despite the sticky swampy terrain, his steps made absolutely no sound. Ho Jung who saw it was shaken.

— Y... you... — Ho Jung thought Kang Yu had the Power to control sounds completely.

Before that, he was making unrealistically loud noises, and now he's muffling his steps. It's not hard to draw conclusions.

— Crap! — Ho Jung's gaze dissipated as a crowd of monsters ran at them.

He screamed to his comrades:

— Any way out?

— No! We're surrounded from all sides!

Even the slightest hope has vanished. Now you could read hopelessness on his face.

Kang Yu was happily watching Ho Jung's actions with a happy face while leaning on a nearby tree.

'It's about time.' Kang Yu was just wondering if it was worth hunting a large flock at once.

And these guys came at the right time and decided on the course of events.

'It would be hard to do it alone.' Kang Yu smiled a bit.

Although he was confident in his abilities, to cope with a hundred monsters at once would be a challenge.

Even maintaining the Silence Power would be too dangerous to fight a hundred monsters. I mean, even if they have bad eyesight, they could still see.

But a wonderful bait like Ho Jung and his party changes everything.

Since they were noisier, of course, all the first blows will go to them, while Kang Yu could just stand aside.

‘Despite the fact that this is a group of losers, they should be able to survive.’ Unlike ordinary hunters, these guys raised the levels of low-level Players for money.

Kang Yu liked that. Compared to other parties, they’d last a long time.

Kang Yu stared at them and smiled.

As they say, ‘when two fight, the third has the advantage.’

He shouldn’t risk his life or put his body in danger.

He’d only watch the group desperately fight the lizardmen and admire how their numbers shrink. And when there’s fewer remaining and they’re exhausted, he’d step in.

Thanks to Ho Jun’s party, he wouldn’t have to get involved in a useless fight.

What about them? Having to hold up this level of defense, they wouldn’t be able to go on the offensive and will simply be stabbed alive.

Kang Yu looked at the fighting group and smiled because they weren’t ready for battle at all.

‘If you don’t last long, I won’t be able to get much benefit.’ Kang Yu hid between the trees to protect himself from the bad-sighted monsters.

— Ah... oh, wow... — Ho Jun, looking at Kang Yu, was about to make an offer to cooperate, but stuck to his overwhelming hatred. — You’re like a demon! —

‘I am a demon.’ Kang Yu smiled coolly.

Even though he looked like a man, he was more like a demon.

If he hadn't become a demon, he couldn't have spent ten thousand years in Hell.

— You'd better be defending yourself, not making speeches. You're going to die without even raising a finger?

— Aaaah! — Ho Jun, full of hatred and holding a dagger in his hand, rushed towards Kang Yu.

'You will die with me!' Ho Jung was convinced that Kang Yu's special ability was related to sound.

Which meant poor fighting skills.

He put all his anger into the dagger and swung as he ran.

— Ho Jun, it's dangerous!

At that moment he was blocked by a few lizardmen.

Ho Jung's unhappy screams drew the monsters' attention to him. They surrounded him from all sides, so he couldn't get to Kang Yu.

With a laugh, Kang Yu said:

— You'd better swing harder.

Even though Ho Jung couldn't hear what Kang Yu was saying because of the Silence Force, it was enough to look at his face to know.

— Aaaaah! You bastard!!!

— Ho Jung, don't shout!

The monsters pointed their spears at Ho Jung, who'd lost all common sense. He couldn't stop his fit of anger and could barely fight off monsters' attacks.

— Defend! We need to protect ourselves!

When a group leader loses his mind, someone else must take over.

In a panic, it was Seo Ye Ri who became such a person. The members of the group turned pale, but they followed her order and took defensive positions.

The monsters kept attacking.

— There are too many!

— Hold on to the last second! — In a hopeless voice, a guy screamed with a shield in his hands.

When you're being poked with spears from all sides, it's hard to get your mind together.

Usually, they would gather a dozen or two lizardmen on the hunt, but it was a first for them to deal with more than a hundred of them.

— They don't attack all at once! Focus on defending!

The screams of his comrades helped Ho Jung regain his senses to some extent, and he began to defend himself.

Ye Ra stood in the middle, and while her comrades were covering for her, she used magic.

— Fiery shock!

She demonstrated her special skill, fire.

The flashes of fire that appeared at the end of her staff flew towards the lizardmen.

The monsters burned out with screams.

— Ha. — Kang Yu watched the fight against monsters with interest.

'They're not so bad.' Though they were losers, they were still capable of fighting despite there being a hundred Lizardmen.

Especially with Ye Ra acting as the group's leader.

— We need to pierce the environment ring!

— There's... there's too many!

Even though they held up well, their faces did not radiate joy.

They understood that soon their strength would run out and it would become many times harder to hold on. Whatever it takes, they need to pierce through the monster ring.

'Okay.' Kang Yu quietly watched their fight and smiled.

This group had more strength than he thought, so they have a good chance of surviving.

'I don't even need to get involved.' They could get rid of most of the Lizardmen pretty quickly, and Kang Yu would figure out what to do later.

He had no intention of helping them now.

He certainly wasn't a good man. More precisely, he survived because he stopped being good in a world where the main rule was: anger for anger, murder for murder.

Once you broke that rule, you couldn't be a resident.

At first, he was worried whether he would have problems if one of them died, but Kang Yu concluded that there was no reason to worry.

'This situation is different from Tae Hyun's.' If Tae Hyun had died then, Kang Yu would have gotten into trouble.

And in this situation, it's not Kang Yu who's killing Ho Jung and his party.

The Lizardmen would be held responsible.

Death by the paws of a monster while hunting at the Gate is commonplace.

Ho Jung sighed, feeling nauseous as he wiped the blood of the Lizardmen off his face.

Due to the large number of opponents, it was impossible to break through them.

But they couldn't fight the whole hundred either.

— Sa... save me! Please, sa... save me! — Ho Jung was screaming in terror, looking towards Kang Yu.

If they didn't get some help, the situation wouldn't change.

Kang Yu lazily extended his hand to the fighting Ho Jung. And then he showed his middle finger.

— Aaaah! — Ho Jung was moaning desperately.

Kang Yu's smile was like a scarecrow. And the look of it reminded Ho Jung of something.

— A demon...

Black wings like a bat. Two horns and a long tail.

Kang Yu had stopped acting like a man and more like a demon.

At that moment, one of the Lizardmen pierced the heart of distracted Ho Jung.

CHAPTER 17

RANK 3 (1)

A few lizardmen fell to the ground from Hellfire.

Tired of fighting with Ho Jung's group, the Lizardmen didn't have the strength to resist Kang Yu, so the monsters were dying one by one.

'That's all.' Kang Yu glanced over the swamp covered with corpses.

Even strong people would vomit at the sight of such a spectacle, but Kang Yu was walking in the swamp like nothing had happened.

Flesh and blood scattered all over the earth was what he had grown used to seeing in Hell.

At that time in his life, he had seen much scarier landscapes every day.

That's why he wasn't bothered by the scenery around him — he'd gotten used to it a long time ago.

— Well, here we go.

The hundreds of bodies lying on the ground were like a banquet for Kang Yu.

'I barely got any experience points.' In fact, most of these monsters were killed by Ho Jung's comrades, which was why he barely got any experience points.

If he had been a regular player, he would have probably been upset, but Kang Yu also had his own ways of raising his level, so he wasn't discouraged.

He didn't hurry to get to the place where most of the bodies lay.

The black smoke, as always, wrapped up the dead bodies of the Lizardmen.

Along with the horrible sound of broken bones and flesh-eating, Kang Yu's body was

being infused with the flow of Magi.

A notice came up.

[Magi raised by 1 unit]

‘Great.’ Just looking at the number of monsters, it was clear that this time he would raise his Magi by a decent number of units.

Kang Yu continued pulling energy out from the bodies while looking at the message that came up.

The number of corpses began to decrease rather quickly.

At that moment, another notice came up.

[Security Warning: You can’t use the Devourer’s Power].

— What? — A new message came up before his eyes.

He was shaking his head, looking at the notice.

‘System warning?’ He remembered hearing a phrase like this before. He’d heard it on his return from Hell to Earth.

He’d killed over a hundred monsters before, but no such message had ever come up.

— Ah... — Kang Yu remembered Ho Jung’s party. — I think they died here, too. —

He noticed Ho Jung’s body with a spear pierced through his chest laying atop the pile of bodies.

Apparently, while using the Devourer’s Power on the bodies of monsters, he’d accidentally hit Ho Jung’s body.

‘I guess the warning was about eating the Player’s body.’ Kang Yu didn’t know exactly what the system warning meant, but this message had never shown up before when he applied this Power on monsters. So his guess might have been right.

‘Then, the Devourer’s Power cannot be used on other Players.’ That was the answer to

the question Kang Yu had been thinking of from the moment he first found out that each Player had a special ability. He'd wondered if the other Players' abilities could be pulled out by the Power of the Devourer.

He'd believed that since he could take Powers from a demon, there was a good chance that he could take Powers from Players too.

'Well, it's not that important.' Kang Yu looked at Ho Jung's body without any regrets.

Besides, the Players' special abilities didn't play an important role for Kang Yu.

He was almighty as it is, with 666 Powers in his arsenal.

'It's not the Powers that matter, it's the amount of Magi that counts.' It took a lot of Magi to be able to use all 666 Powers freely.

That was the most important thing for Kang Yu right now.

He bypassed all the bodies except for Ho Jung's Party members.

There had been several notifications.

[Magi raised by 2 units]

[You have reached 30 units of Magi]

— Ha, — Kang Yu took a deep breath and felt for Magi in his body.

Having sucked Magi out of more than 100 bodies of monsters, he felt his body become stronger with the significant increase of Magi.

'This time I managed to raise Magi by 5 units.' It wasn't such a bad result.

No, it's not. Without moving a finger, he'd gotten as much as 5 units of Magi – this was a promising result.

'Magi doesn't just add up in numbers, I can feel it.' Kang Yu, now with 30 units, felt many times stronger and more alert than before.

He decided to try one of Andras' forces.

There was a black flame on his palm.

Comparing the Hellfire that he'd used a couple of hours ago to the fire burning now, the difference was obvious. The flames were much bigger.

'Wonderful.' He felt the difference between 20 and 30 units of Magi clearer than when he promoted it from 10 to 20.

— All that's left is to raise the level. — Kang Yu, gathering the mana stones lying on the ground, nodded his head with satisfaction.

Soon he will get rank 3 and find out if the force that sealed his Man Ma Jung was really weakening with each increase in rank.

'Is it worth a little more hunting?' Kang Yu walked past the cold bodies of Ho Jung and his comrades in cold blood.

* * *

It's been three days since Ho Jung and his guys died.

Kang Yu continued the mass hunting of Lizardmen and quickly raised his level.

As a result, he reached level 19 in three days, whereas most Players took a month to do so.

If someone saw the speed at which it was going up, it would probably seem strange or even absurd to them.

— I think I'll get rank 3 today,— Kang Yu said excitedly at breakfast to Han Sol.

'Accordingly, I can go to a higher level gate.'

He will obtain the right to enter a Level C Gate, but to do so he must obtain a Level C Player ID by selling more mana stones and receiving Rank 3.

Since the Level C Gate is very different from the Level D Gate, Players usually need training.

In fact, there were few cases where Players get Rank 3 but continued to hunt at the

level D Gate because the monsters at the level C Gate were too strong.

That's exactly what Ho Jung's party had been like.

'They say that the entrance check is stricter there...' Kang Yu heard at some bar that unlike Level D and E Gate, where the only ID is checked at the entrance, Level C checks everything.

It could be burdensome if he decided to use the Force of Blind Faith and sneak in.

'I'll settle for selling the mana stones collected today and raise my level.' He'd earned 92,000,000 won in the last three days.

He also collected 23 Class D mana stones, killing over 400 Lizardmen.

These mana stones were more than enough for a promotion.

— Kang Yu, are you going to hunt today too?

— Yeah, I'll probably be back tonight.

— Aren't you tired? It's been a while since you've rested.

— It's okay, — Kang Yu said calmly.

In fact, physically, he didn't feel a drop in fatigue.

As soon as his Magi exceeded 30 units, the easy hunt for Lizardmen had become even easier.

He was stronger than two or three parties united together, so it couldn't have been difficult for him.

— Oh, I see.

— And when does your training end?

— I don't think there's more than a couple of days left. Today we're going on a real goblin hunt to raise our level.

— Wow.

— I'm not sure if I'm going to get a good special ability, but I want to get rank 2 as soon as possible.

— You'll get it soon.

After a short conversation with Han Sol, Kang Yu immediately headed towards the Gate.

Before the gate, as always, there were many people who were either looking for Players to join their own party or looking for a party for themselves.

'I think I'm used to it.' Six days have passed since he returned to Earth.

He was finally getting used to seeing people walking around. In Hell, he'd always been surrounded by demons.

'I'll get to rank 3 and it will get much easier.' For the sake of a fun and carefree life on Earth, accumulating strength and money was important, and because of this, he could not yet enjoy what he really likes.

After being promoted to rank 3 and selling the mana stones he collected, he planned to rest and have some fun.

— Excuse me, are you looking for a party?

— No one will take robbers into parties...

— Ha! Then, how about joining us?

— Oh, really?

When Kang Yu reached the gate, he heard a familiar voice.

— Huh? — He turned his head towards the voice.

It turned out to be Kang Dae Su, whom he met while hunting goblins.

He had already assembled a party of several people and was now talking to a robber

who no one wanted to take in.

‘Nothing changes.’ Kang Yu smiled and entered the gate.

‘I should say hello to him.’ Even though they barely knew each other, Dae Su was the kind of person who didn’t annoy Kang Yu with his behavior, so he wouldn’t mind a conversation.

‘But first, let’s raise my level.’ Wanting to quickly raise his level after being stuck at 19 for so long, he went in search of Lizardmen.

There were more important things to do before dealing with Dae Su.

‘Found some.’ He noticed three monsters near him and immediately used the power of Hellfire, directing it towards the lizardmen.

Immediately, three monsters in flames fell to the ground with wild screams.

— Okay. Next... — At that moment, the familiar sound of notification rang out to him, announcing a new notice.

[Level D Boss successfully destroyed]

[Level increased by 1 unit]

— Huh? — Kang Yu looked at the notice with confusion.

CHAPTER 18

RANK 3 (2)

[You have reached level 20]

[Reaching level 20, you get Rank 3]

[You have a special ability of rank 3]

— I was very close. — Kang Yu, killing three monsters, saw the warning and smiled.

‘If I had known about it, I would have hunted a little more yesterday and raised the level,’ Kang Yu thought with regret.

But it was impossible to know exactly how many experience points you already have or need to gain.

‘Anyway, I was going to hunt all day long but I finished early. That’s good.’

Kang Yu closed his eyes to feel his Magi. It was time to test his theory about the weakening power that sealed Man Ma Jung.

Now his body was circulating a lot more Magi than before.

Kang Yu put his hand forward and used Andras’s power to light the Hellfire.

The big fire lit from Kang Yu’s palm. It was a real flame from Hell, hungry for life force.

Kang Yu smiled happily at the fire dancing two meters high.

— As expected, I was right.

As soon as he reached rank 3, the power that sealed Man Ma Jung had weakened even more, and more Magi was flowing into his body.

It was a force incomparable even to his transition from level 25 to 30.

— Beautiful. — He had the Power of demons, but he was oppressed by the fact that he does not have the necessary amount of Magi to use them.

‘But it’s still not enough.’ Even now, having received 3 ranks, there were more Powers that he couldn’t use than the ones he could.

Of course, compared to the moment he first arrived to Earth, he now had much more freedom in using his powers.

‘If I keep this up, I can completely get rid of the forces that have sealed Man Ma Jung.’

It would certainly take more time and effort to keep raising his level. But if there was a way to get back to his original strength, he would use it.

If there wasn’t a gate on Earth, there wouldn’t be such a need.

Gates, monsters and Players — if they didn’t exist, he wouldn’t have needed his Powers.

Initially, his plans were not as ambitious as, for example, taking over the entire Earth. All he had wanted was to live in peace and enjoy what he had missed in ten thousand years.

However, when he saw how the world changed, he changed his mind as well.

‘I have to be strong.’ To enjoy all the benefits, you have to be strong.

If you are weak in this world, you will quickly be destroyed.

On Earth, unlike Hell, there was no *need* to be the strongest, but being able to defend yourself in an emergency was a must.

— Well, it’s time to test the new ability. — He’d already confirmed that with each increase in rank, the power sealing Man Ma Jung will weaken. So now it was time to learn about his new skill.

Kang Yu opened the status window to check his new special ability.

[Special ability 3 rank: Craving for Maryok (Class: A)]

[Application: The ability to suck out the power of Maryok imprisoned in the mana stone, turning it into Magi.]

— Ha! — His eyes shone as he studied his status window,

He had found a new way to accumulate Magi.

‘The mana stone...’ It was the core of every monster.

Earth was currently holding on to Maryok’s energy from the mana stones.

It was also the way for Players to earn money. They extract the mana stones and sell them to the state.

— Well, is it worth testing? — He pulled mana stones out from the body of a newly murdered Lizardmen and used a new ability.

The Maryok contained in the Mana stone was transformed into Magi and fused into Kang Yu’s body.

‘Not bad.’ The amount of Magi he could draw out from one monster has increased, or more accurately, it has doubled.

Compared to the Overwhelming Sense of Hunger, the power he’d received when he was promoted to rank 2, the ability he just received was more useful.

‘But then I will not be able to make money...’ Mana stones, which were the main source of income, could not make him any money if he turned them all into Magi.

‘I’ll have to control my actions.’ Though, the Players’ income was already many times as much as the money that ordinary people make.

Once he could hunt from a high-level gate, it’d be enough to sell just a few mana stones to live a quiet life.

‘I’ve made 90,000,000 won in the last three days alone.’ If he cut his earnings in half to increase the amount of the Magi he received, it was a worthwhile investment.

‘Today, I won’t sell any stones.’ He drained all three bodies of power with the Devourer’s Power.

Due to the fact that he finished the hunt earlier than expected, he had a lot of free time.

Kang Yu had received a new ability and found a great place to hunt.

— Come to think of it, I haven't seen the boss yet.

If he killed a hobgoblin at Level E Gate and got a Class C Mana stone, then now the boss at this gate should have a higher class Mana stone.

Kang Yu used the Power of Flying and soared to the top.

Because he was promoted to 3rd rank and was able to use more Magi, the Power of Flying had become something he could use easily.

'Because of the tangled tree branches, I can't see anything.' Kang Yu hoped to find the boss from the sky, but it was harder than he thought, and he snapped his tongue disappointed.

'Ah, if only I could use the Observer's Power.' That was the most powerful Power of Astaroth, so Kang Yu couldn't use it now.

Kang Yu sighed in disappointment and descended to the ground smoothly.

— Brothers! What are you guys doing?

That's when Kang Yu heard the familiar voice and the clear sound of metal.

— Dae Su? — That was Dae Su's voice, who had earlier been gathering the parties in front of the gate. His voice was filled with anger, and he spoke faster than usual.

'What's going on out there?' If it was just some random person, Kang Yu wouldn't have cared about what was going on, but it was a familiar voice, so he was curious.

Once Kang Yu reached the ground, he headed towards the voice.

— Ha, you even act like a filthy pig.

— What the...

Kang Yu saw two guys — one with an axe and the other with a sword — surrounding

Dae Su.

Next to him, there was a bleeding Robber with whom they'd talked with at the gate.

— Why are you attacking your own teammates?!

— Why are you so loud? Now all lizardmen will come here.

— Answer the question! — shouted Dae Su, putting up a shield in front of himself.

'Scene of betrayal?' Listening to Dae Su's dialogue with his comrades, Kang Yu squinted.

Even when he'd heard only a fragment of the conversation, it wasn't hard to understand what's going on.

Those two guys had been in Dae Su's party and then suddenly attacked their teammates.

"Teamkillers?" It looks like they sneaked into the gate under the guise of group members, but their goal wasn't to kill monsters but to kill their own teammates to take their valuables and items.

After all, it wasn't surprising if someone died in the gate, so they abuse their special abilities by killing other Players.

— Don't make any noise, — One of the guys swung an axe next to Dae Su's head.

He kept staring firmly at the guys without letting go of his shield.

— Huh, you're really tough.

— Are you sure you have two ranks? Why are you holding up so well?

The guys were surprised by Dae Su's strength.

And he, with his teeth clenched, concentrated all his power on his arm with the shield. And the shield caught on fire with a bluish tint.

— My soul, unlike yours, is not for sale.

— You seem to have discovered a powerful ability?

— If you have not reached rank 3, you cannot defeat us.

The guys grinned and started getting even closer to Dae Su.

Dae Su fought surprisingly well, but no matter how you spun it, his opponents had level 30 and rank 4. The difference was incommensurable.

— It's time to finish.

— You know you can't kill him, right?

— Of course.

They smiled sinisterly and intercepted the guns.

Kang Yu, who was hiding behind tangled tree branches nearby, frowned when he heard this conversation.

'Can't kill?' Those words didn't fit the description of a teamkiller.

Kang Yu looked at Dae Su, who was holding a shield in his hand and became concerned.

'Should I help?' If it was a stranger, he would have just walked by.

Because even though they didn't get to know each other very long, Dae Su had made a good impression, and Kang Yu didn't want to just pass by.

— Hold the shield tighter, pig. It's going to hurt.

The guy with the axe began to concentrate his strength and his axe was shrouded in black smoke.

When he saw it, Kang Yu's eyes opened wide.

'Magi...' The power that the guy with the axe had was definitely Magi.

It was very different from Maryok.

Besides...

It's a force that normal humans can't possess.

Kang Yu, with a frown and a deep breath, came out from behind the trees.

It wasn't about saving Dae Su anymore.

'Who are those guys?' They were people who could use Magi. Kang Yu needed to know who they were.

CHAPTER 19

THE ANDRAS GUILD (1)

— Huh? The guy who was swinging in Dae Su turned to the rustling side.

— Who are you?

— I'm just a passerby.

Two guys looked at Kang Yu with a frown.

The guy with the sword clicked his tongue and started talking:

— Well, you're out of luck. You can forget about getting out of here safe and sound.

— Here's another problem.

They, who had been pointing their weapons at Dae Su before, were now beginning to get interested in Kang Yu.

The guy with the axe continued:

— He doesn't need to be taken prisoner, right?

— Yeah. Those two are enough.

The guy with the axe smiled sinisterly and headed towards Kang Yu.

The Magi that wrapped the axe around was getting bigger and bigger.

After licking his lips, he looked at Kang Yu.

— His appearance isn't bad... And his body isn't bad either. It'll taste good.

He was talking feverishly, but he kept drilling Kang Yu with a cold look.

You could tell from his frequent breathing that he was at his limit.

— Haha! Let's look at you from behind!

Kang Yu didn't say anything. Listening to the heavy breathing interrupted by screaming, his face became distorted.

— What kind of jerks...?

Kang Yu didn't know what the man was talking about or what his back had to do with it, but it didn't sound good.

— Hee-hee-hee! Try to beg desperately! Then maybe I will spare you.

The axe guy's mood turned sour, and he stepped up.

He rushed forward sharply and tried to strangle Kang Yu.

Kang Yu took a step forward and put out one hand.

It wasn't necessary to use Powers against such idiots, and there was no need to use special fighting techniques either.

Kang Yu hit the attacker on the cheek, making him fall to the ground. The man staggered and climbed up from the ground and grabbed his swollen cheek in confusion.

— What... what is that?

— What the hell are you doing?

— It's a little weird...

Kang Yu, who was approaching fast, hit him on the cheek again.

When he reached rank 3 and got, even more, Magi, his physical abilities became many times better.

Kang Yu continued hitting him on the cheek.

—Wa... Wait!

This was the body he had been training for ten thousand years, and now all his Powers were intertwined with 3rd rank.

Despite the fact that the opponents were 4 ranks, they couldn't be called opponents, because Kang Yu, who had accumulated Magi, were much stronger than the guys in front.

— What a bastard!

The guy with the axe stayed on the ground, and the other guy with the sword headed towards Kang Yu.

His sword was wrapped around by black Magi.

Kang Yu looked at the swordsman and gathered some force in the air in front of him.

'The Power of the Destructive Void.'

A charge of compressed air went towards the guy with the sword, and he fell to the ground almost immediately, with his lip broken and beaten with air as hard as stone.

— Wha... What the hell?

— I'm interested in something.— Kang Yu came close to the guy who was beaten up.

He squatted in front of the guy and asked for low voices:

— Where did you get Magi from?

He couldn't believe that two other people had a special ability that would transform Maryok into a Magi.

But it seemed even more impossible that they could have the same Devourer's Power, capable of pulling Magi out of the bodies of monsters.

— Oh, my... — By mentioning the Magi, the guys' faces frowned.

He continued in a suspicious tone:

— How do you know about Ma...

The guy who was going to ask Kang Yu a counter-question got another slap.

— *I'm* asking the questions here. All you're allowed to do is answer.

After hitting that guy in the face a few more times, Kang Yu continued:

— I'll ask again. Where did you get Magi from?

The guy was shivering at the anger coming from Kang Yu.

Kang Yu, looking at that guy shivering, used the Force of Fear.

He wasn't scared enough for the Power to make a puppet out of him, but the Power will reinforce his intimidation even more.

— Aah! — The guy's pants got wet.

He didn't think Kang Yu was even human, just someone terrifying.

He opened his mouth slowly and said:

— Fou... founder of the guild.

— Seo Tae Ho! What are you saying? Are you out of your mind?

The guy with the sword looked at his stuttering comrade and went in his direction.

Kang Yu slowly turned towards him.

— Be quiet.

— Huh? — When a wave of power was emitting from Kang Yu, the man stood still and his face turned pale while fighting his fear: — You... how do you know about Magi...
—

— I told you to be quiet. — Another air current hit the guy hard.

He fell to the ground and lost consciousness.

Kang Yu's eyes turned to Tae Ho again.

— The founder of the guild?

— That's right, Tae Ho.

— What's the name of the guild?

— Ahn... Andras. We belong to the guild of Andras.

The Andras Guild.

The guild was created in honor of one of Solomon's 72 demons.

The guild to which Tae Hyun belonged. The Guild, which has been the subject of controversial rumors.

— The founder transmits this power to us through the ritual.

— The ritual? — Kang Yu is frowning. — What kind of ritual?

— It's... — Tae Ho's eyes were wide.

Fear enveloped him so much that he couldn't hide anything.

Kang Yu used the Force again. A white foam leaked out of Tae Ho's mouth, and he fell to the ground, twitching.

— Say it,— Kang Yu said in a low tone.

— Oh... ritual, oh, oh! — There were blood vessels all over Tae Ho's body.

The blood vessels grew like the roots of trees, and Tae Ho threw up blood of a nearly black color, after which he died.

Kang Yu, disappointed, leaned over Tae Ho's body.

'I never learned what kind of ritual it was.' He didn't understand why Tae Ho died.

After looking at the dead body again, Kang Yu slowly got up.

Dae Su came up to him.

— Ka... Kang Yu?

— That's right.

— You defeated two guys alone... — He looked suspiciously at Kang Yu, who he'd seen a few days ago at the E-gate, and now he's put two guys down with four ratings.

Kang Yu shrugged his shoulders and answered calmly:

— That time, I just had some business at the E-gate.

— Aah! Oh, I see! So you're not a new guy?

— You're right.

Actually, he had just quickly leveled up from being a rookie, but he lied to Dae Su.

— Then the words you said that time makes sense. Anyway, thank you, Kang Yu. If it wasn't for you, those nuts would have killed me.

—Thank... thank you for saving me. — The guy with the wounded neck came forward to show his appreciation. — My name is Kim Tae Hyun. —

— Kang Yu.

— That's how it should be! As it turned out, you have a high level too,— Dae Su said easily with an easy smile.

Kang Yu looked at Dae Su, who thanked him and smiled.

— Kang Yu, I'll pay you back this debt.

— Haha, okay.

— I always knew that the guys from Andras Guild didn't have a good reputation, but to attack like that... — Dae Su looked down at two guys who had attacked him recently and frowned.

Kang Yu did not understand why, despite knowing their bad reputation, Dae Su still took them into his party.

— I'll report this case to Hwaran Squad.

— Hwaran Squad?

— The government squad in charge of the Players. They'll deal with the guild quickly if they report that they're killing other Players.

— Hmm. — Kang Yu thought about what he said. After thinking about the situation, he finally said: — Don't report it. —

— What? Don't declare it? What are you saying, Kang Yu?

— I'll deal with Andras Guild personally.

Kang Yu had to find out in person what kind of ritual gave people the ability to use Magi.

If the government intervenes in this matter, there's a good chance Kang Yu wouldn't be able to find out.

— Um, okay.— He nodded his head hesitantly.

Kang Yu looked at Dae Su with some surprise.

'He's smart.' He looked like a monster in appearance, but he was brave and seemed to quickly guess what Kang Yu was up to.

'We made a quick agreement,' Kang Yu thought he could find out about the guild in his own way.

— Then let's forget about the fact that...

— I'm Dae Su! I'll follow you and help you find out the truth!

— What?

— 'Finding out in person' is like a novel. To be generous and seek the truth.

'Actually, no.'

— I love novels!

‘So what?’

— I, Dae Su, have been imbued with your generosity! My life belongs to you! I’ll become a faithful assistant!

Dae Su, with a shining look, bowed down to Kang Yu on one knee.

While acting like that, he resembled someone else.

Kang Yu felt a headache and put his hand to his forehead.

‘What even is this...?’

Another Pallock?

CHAPTER 20

THE ANDRAS GUILD (2)

Pallock.

The first strong demon that Kang Yu had met when he crossed from the Eight Thousandth Circle of Hell to the Nine Thousandth.

After killing the Seven Great Demons, Pallock was the next strongest demon. Having been defeated by Kang Yu, he swore eternal devotion and knelt.

‘Terribly annoying.’ He was so simple that Kang Yu thought about whether his muscles were all he had for a brain, but Kang Yu treated him with sincerity.

— Let’s go out and talk first.

— Yes! Got it!

Kang Yu threw the second guy on his shoulder, who was lying unconscious the whole time and started walking.

— Kang Yu, I’ll carry him.

Dae Su put that guy on his shoulder and they went towards the exit.

Even the body of a healthy man would seem tiny compared to Dae Su.

‘Anyway, he looks like a monster.’ Kang Yu grinned, thinking that Dae Su looks like a monster carrying his prey.

* * *

— Thank you! — When Kim Tae Hyun came out of the gate, he bowed to Kang Yu again.

— As soon as I find a way to get rid of the Robber title and get some treatment, I’ll pay you back immediately. —

— You can find a way to get rid of it?

— You see, Robbers don't usually get paid at the party, so the supports don't help us much.

— So that's how it is. — Kang Yu nodded his head with understanding.

Tae Hyun thanked Kang Yu once again and staggered off in the right direction.

Kang Yu smiled watching the back of the young man leaving.

'It's nice to do good things. It's certainly more pleasant than making enemies.'

Who knows, maybe Tae Hyun will really get rid of the Robber's label and achieve something.

'The likelihood is certainly not high...' But it couldn't get any worse anyway.

Kang Yu turned his gaze to Dae Su.

He was already looking at Kang Yu with glimmering eyes.

It looked like a well-trained bear was standing in front of him.

'What should I do with it?' He couldn't get rid of this guy so easily.

— What level are you on?

— On the 12th, I just got 2nd rank.

— Hmm, and you haven't done the basic education?

— My special ability at rank 1 was class C, so I just started hunting and gaining levels.

— Oh, wow.

A Class C special ability at rank 1 was not a bad achievement.

— And your special ability of rank 2 is in which class?

— Heh heh, I have a class A special ability of class 2.

‘I didn’t expect him to have such a good ability.’ Anyone who got a special ability of class B at rank 2 is considered gifted. And he didn’t just have a B ability, but a class A ability.

‘So that’s why those guys didn’t bring him down.’ Despite Dae Su’s low level, he had powerful special abilities, which made it difficult for them to deal with him.

— Why didn’t you join a guild? With that level, you can get anywhere.

— I was just thinking about which guild to join. But now it’s not necessary.

Kang Yu looked at Dae Su.

He looked back at Kang Yu with passion and clenched his fists.

— I, Dae Su, am devoted to your greatness! From now on, I want to follow you!

— Hmm... — He exhaled hard and looked at Dae Su with his arms crossed.

‘Why shouldn’t I accept him?’ At first, he had seemed a little annoying, but if he had such powerful special abilities, then things were different.

Dae Su was a Player to invest in.

‘Players who have powerful special abilities at rank 2 are more likely to get equally good abilities at next rankings.’ Dae Su would likely get an S-level ability next time.

‘It would have been nice to make him a subordinate.’ For Kang Yu who was used to fighting alone, there was no need for a partner at all.

But if it was a subordinate who would obey all orders, it would change everything.

Two would be more efficient than one, and he could handle all the hard work.

‘And more importantly...’ Kang Yu felt Dae Su’s loyal look.

It wasn’t strength that was most important in choosing subordinates.

The most important thing is absolute loyalty, the certainty that they will not stab you in the back.

Therefore, accepting Dae Su as a subordinate was a good decision.

‘And Han Sol will soon receive two ranks.’ With her as a support and Dae Su as a tank, they would make a good party.

‘I think it’s worth it.’ Investing in Dae Su’s abilities was not a bad idea.

— That’s good. From now on, I’ll lead you forward.

— Oh, oh, thank you, Kang Yu! — said Dae Su with an excited voice and a shining look.

— Should we break into the shelter of the Andras Guild right now? Heh heh. I’ll protect you at the cost of my life! —

— No, I’ll go to the guild alone.

— Why would you go alone?

— Dae Su, — Kang Yu addressed him in a low voice.

Dae Su shivered.

Kang Yu continued to speak in a low tone:

— You almost died at the hands of two members of this guild, didn’t you?

— That... That’s right.

— Do you think you can really protect me now?

When Dae Su heard that undeniable fact, he bit his lip unhappily.

He knew himself that he couldn’t help Kang Yu right now.

When he saw the disappointed sag in Dae Su’s shoulders, Kang Yu put his hand on his shoulder.

— It’s okay, Dae Su.

— Kang Yu?

— For you, this is just the beginning. If you get beaten up now, it'll be harder for you to get stronger. Don't you agree?

When Dae Su heard the words of support, he got a slight blush on his face.

— Yes! That's right! My story is just beginning!

— That's right.

— Heh, heh, heh. I'll be stronger and I can be your shield!

Seeing the passion in Dae Su's eyes, Kang Yu smiled and nodded.

— I believe you.

— Give me your number. If you need anything, call me anytime.

— Oh, by the way, I have a request.

— Just say the word! — The tone of his voice expressed his full readiness.

— One of my acquaintances will soon graduate from the school. Can you take her to the party and help her raise his level?

— In what position, if you don't mind telling me?

— Support.

— Then, here's a request from me. Let's find a damage dealer and get a good party. —

Dae Su kept nodding and smiling like a good person.

— Then let's get in touch.

— Kang Yu, will you go straight to the guild?

— I'm not sure. — Kang Yu looked at a guy who was lying unconscious on the ground.

With that guy with the sword, it shouldn't be difficult to find the guild's lair.

'It won't be a problem to meet the guild.' Andras's guild wasn't the largest in Korea and was quite average in size, so Kang Yu had the strength to confront them alone.

Because when he reached level 20, the force that sealed Man Ma Jung had grown even weaker, so he got a decent boost to his strength.

In addition, Kang Yu's strength couldn't just be described by his level or the ability units he received.

He had excellent fighting skills that had been honed over ten thousand years.

Even if you don't take into account his vast number of Powers, the chances of winning were great.

'The question is how to get there unnoticed.' He certainly had skills similar to the Silence Force that could hide his presence, but to maintain them for a long time is not an easy task.

'If I'm noticed, I won't be able to learn about the order of the rite.' If that happens, the purpose of penetrating Andras' guild would be unfulfilled.

— Hmm, — Kang Yu closed his eyes and thought.

— Hello... — At that moment, a guy lying unconscious tried to get up.

He chose a good time to wake up. Kang Yu immediately grabbed his neck.

— I have a question. Be so kind as to answer.

The guy, without reacting, tried to get up.

— Nod if you understand me.

The guy with the blue face hastily nodded and coughed up.

— What's your name?

— Ka... Kang Chul Ho.

— That's good, Chul Ho. Not so long ago, you discussed that these two Players can't be killed and must be taken somewhere.

The guy didn't say anything. He bit his lip and looked away, clearly avoiding the answer. There were sweat drops on his forehead.

— I don't... I don't remember that.

— Yeah? — Kang Yu hit him on the head like a soccer ball.

— Ahhhh!

— Are you starting to remember something?

— Mm-hmm...

— Not enough?

— Not... no! — Chul Ho bent his head.

Dae Su opened his mouth in surprise at how skillfully Kang Yu was conducting the interrogation.

— P... a hostage is needed in order to use him as a victim.

— A victim?

— Yes.

— Do you need it for the ritual?

The guy took a serious look and nodded.

Kang Yu, without knowing why, grinned when he heard that answer.

— You guys are even crazier than I thought.

Kang Yu still didn't know exactly what 'ritual' was, but if they make a victim out of a person, it's very likely that this ritual is like something primitive.

— Hmm. — Kang Yu squinted and thought that the Andras Guild was really going crazy.

‘Victim... ’ At that moment, Kang Yu slipped an idea into his head and smiled.

He turned his head towards Chul Ho and said it in a low tone:

— I have a request.

CHAPTER 21

THE ANDRAS GUILD (3)

The Andras Guild.

One of the most important medium-sized guilds. It has been the subject of the wildest rumors.

Especially its founder, a player named Cho Dok Hyun, also attracting the attention of Hwaran squad, was under close observation.

Under these conditions, they were based in a place where people wouldn't exactly go, and no one would know where they were.

Walking through confusing alleyways that looked more like a labyrinth, the guy guarding the front door said in a low tone:

— Hold it right there.

He was staring at the human figure emerging from the darkness.

Looking at the familiar face in the dim light, the guy relaxed.

— Kang Chul Ho?

— D... yes.

— You and Tae Ho were going after the victims today. Why did you come back so late?

— Bus... business. I had things to do.

Chul Ho gestured to the huge suitcase he brought with him.

The guy guarding the entrance cocked his head and looked at Chul Ho who was acting strange.

— Business? What kind of business? And where did you lose Tae Ho?

— Tae Ho is dead.

— What? How is he dead?

The guy, obviously not believing his ears, looked at Jung Ho.

— Weren't you at the Level D Gate? Are you saying that he died at the hands of a Level 2 Player?

— We crossed paths with one high-class Player. I barely managed to kill him and got the sacrifice.

— Huh.

— I'll write a detailed report later. Take the sacrifice.

He handed over the huge suitcase.

The guy who received the shipment squinted and looked at Chul Ho.

— You're acting a little weird.

— I'm a little shocked by Tae Ho's death.

— Hmm. You *were* in a very good relationship with him. There's not much time left before the ritual, so you can tell me about it later.

— Yes... yes. Then I... — Chul Ho, who no longer wanted to be in this unfortunate place, quickly turned around.

At that moment, the guy guarding the entrance put his hand on his shoulder.

— You need to participate in the ritual too.

— Today... I don't want to.

— What? What do you mean? I mean, you brought the sacrifice, so you should get an award. I envy you. You'll have a new Power after you get the Magi.

— I don't... I don't need it.

Not understanding what happened with Chul Ho, he squinted again and shook his head.

Getting the 'reward' was the most important part of the Players' ritual.

When they receive a 'reward,' they also receive Magi, a more powerful and destructive force than Maryok.

The Magi is like a drug.

With the power comes thirst, and then that thirst is replaced by something more.

— Something else happened? — The guy looked at Chul Ho with doubt, unable to believe anyone would refuse to be rewarded with all his might. He seemed to be willing to give his life as well to not participate in the ritual.

The Chul Ho he knew would never give up gaining strength just because his comrade died.

Chul Ho's forehead was sweating, and he turned to the guy.

— No... nothing happened. Deal with the victim, please.

— Hmm...

Looking after Chul Ho running away, the guy opened the suitcase he left behind.

Inside, a man was lying unconscious, with sharp features and blood on his head.

— It's true that he's the victim. — After guaranteeing this, the guy closed the suitcase and brought it into the guild's lair.

As soon as he went inside, a skinny man in a big hoodie approached him, his face covered in shadows.

The guy with the suitcase bowed deeply.

— Founder! The victim has arrived.

— We're late today.

— Our men were attacked by a high-class Player.

— Hmm. So what?

— They say Tae Ho died.

— Oh, I see.

Cho Dok Hyun was indifferent, as if he wasn't interested in the news of his guild member's death, and turned his back on the guy.

— Bring in the victim. The ritual will begin soon.

— Yes! — The guy answered loudly and dragged his suitcase towards the ritual room.

Inside the room were eight guild members kneeling and dressed in tidy robes.

They were Players who knew the true nature of the guild of Andras.

— Ooh!

— The great Andras!

As the guild members greeted Cho Dok Hyun into the room, they bowed forward.

Cho Dok Hyun's radiant gaze directed at them was more like the gaze of a madman. What was going on here was more like a gathering of religious fanatics than the guild.

Cho Dok Hyun smiled ominously as he looked at the audience.

'Everything is going well.'

It's been a year since the turnover.

The number of his followers, albeit slowly, has been increasing.

Cho Dok Hyun's eyes were shining like a madman's, and he was clicking his tongue.

It wasn't that hard to corrupt the Players with Magi.

Because if you're a Player, you're attracted to power, and the Magi was the right thing for it.

'A little more and they will become demons in human form.' The more Magi humans consume, the more they become like a demon.

Cho Dok Hyun himself was already filled 20% with the devil's power.

His goal was to become the strongest demon in human form.

He was also going to increase the power he has.

His smile trembled with madness as he remembered the moment he heard about the possibility of a ritual.

He could not have been wrong: the more rituals you perform, the more people you sacrifice, the more Magi you get and become stronger.

Devilish powers give the Players powerful abilities, which was ridiculously praised.

'It's enough to become a demon.'

Eternal youth and infinite powers.

Being a demon is the eternal road that can rid you of death.

— Let us begin the ritual, — he said with a low voice and struck the ground with his dark brown staff.

— Uh-oh!

— Great!

When they heard the ritual began, the members of the guild bowed and stuck their heads to the floor.

— Prepare the mana stone.

— Oh, yes!

The guy ripping the victim's body upon the altar opened a safe just below.

There were over a thousand mana stones inside.

To perform the ritual, they took out all the stones they had.

'It will be possible to perform 30 more rituals with these mana stones.' Cho Dok Hyun looked at the mana stones stored under the altar and smiled ominously.

— Who is receiving the reward today?

— Chul Ho was supposed to receive it, but he said he wouldn't participate in the ritual this time.

— Did he, now? — Dok Hyun squinted and nodded his head. — In that case, no one will be rewarded today. —

— Ahh...

His words made the faces of all the guild members darken. And then there was a desire and judgment in their eyes.

— Quiet!

There was silence in the hall.

— If you want to be rewarded so much, bring the sacrifice and bring the mana stone. If you do not take action, you will not receive the reward.

— Yes!

Dok Hyun, listening to his followers, smiled coldly.

'This time, I'll take the Power for myself.' He took a deep breath in excitement as he imagined drawing the Magi from the victim.

— Let's get started.

While he had still been a disciple, he learned to extract the Maryok from mana stones. So part of that thousand rocks has already lost its light.

The Magi square below the altar illuminated and began to distort the air.

In this little distorted air, black power was spilling over.

The Magi.

Power, many times more destructive than Maryok, a great force that can turn a man into a demon.

‘Wonderful.’ He smiled satisfactorily, looking at the successfully obtained Magi.

Using the Magi square for the ritual, they created a rift leading straight to Hell.

The resulting rifted Magi was headed for the body of the victim.

If they had not used a victim and immediately absorbed the Magi of the rift, the person who took the force would certainly die.

Once the Magi enters the body, the ritual ends. All that was left was to wait for the Magi to kill the victim.

‘Tonight I will drink all the blood.’ After drinking blood from the victim’s body, they received the Magi safely.

Since there was no need to share blood with a follower today, he could get all the power at once.

‘Kill faster!’ He turned to the rift from which the Magi was flowing into the victim’s body, wanting to drink blood faster. And the Magi really began to flow at an even higher rate.

‘He’s holding up well.’ He looked surprised at the victim receiving the Magi. Usually, the victims would start twitching, but now he wasn’t watching it.

Of course, each person had their own limit on getting a Magi.

Sometimes it didn’t even take a second to receive the Magi, and then the person died

immediately.

‘Perhaps he has a special Class A ability?’ The higher the ability class, the longer the victim could withstand the Magi.

‘If he holds on so long...’ Of course, the longer Magi flows into the victim’s body, the more it becomes.

Dok Hyun, watching how long a Magi spills over into the victim’s body, smiled joyfully.

It took a lot of strength to maintain the split, of course, but so far, the mana stones have been sufficient.

‘How lucky!’ Of all the victims he’d seen before, the guy lying on the altar had been drawing in energy the longest.

And being able to drink all the blood on his own, he couldn’t rejoice in such a strong victim.

It was as if heaven itself had given him such a chance.

‘His strength is ten... no, once every fifteen more times than a normal victim.’ Dok Hyun’s desire was even stronger.

— Hurry up and open your eyes and scream that there is power! — His thoughts have involuntarily come out of his mouth.

He wanted to drink the blood-filled with Magi right now.

— Haaaaaah!

The split Magi continued to flow into the victim’s body.

— Yes! Perfect!

He waited until the light from the magi square went out and for the victim to scream.

— Huh? — But no matter how long he waited, the young man wouldn’t open his eyes.

— What’s going on? —

And the Magi still kept flowing into the boy's body.

— So why doesn't it stop?

It kept flowing.

— Wait... wait a minute.

Without stopping.

— St... stop!

Not for a second.

— I said stop!

The Magi began flowing into the body of the young man even faster.

Until all the mana stones brought by the followers lost their glow.

As there was no more strength to sustain the rift, the distorted air just disappeared.

— Ahhh! — Because the forces that could sustain thirty more rituals had evaporated at a time, Dok Hyun made a complaint cry.

The young man lying on the altar began to rise up.

He looked around with curiosity and smiled.

— Wow, that was 20 units of Magi at once.

He cracked a smile at a sudden gift.

Dok Hyun, terrified that nothing had happened to the victim, couldn't shut his mouth.

— Can we do this ritual again?

There was a coffin silence hanging from the room.

CHAPTER 22

DEMON FOLLOWERS (1)

‘Fanatics.’ There was no other way to label them. Kang Yu, who had snuck into the guild of Andras under the guise of a victim, laid on the table and cracked open his eyes to observe the members of this guild.

As soon as Dok Hyun had entered the room, the words of praise started to echo. It was like a meeting of a pseudo-religious organization.

‘And also...’ Kang Yu felt the changes in their bodies.

Their bodies had begun to change demonically under the influence of the Magi.

Like Kang Yu himself, he was more like a demon than a human.

Each of them, albeit to a different degree, was on the way to becoming a demon in human form.

Knowing this, he could understand their crazy behavior.

The body of the demon is always filled with desire, which never becomes smaller and only increases. If you compare them to animals, it is as if they are always in heat, thirsty for mating.

Since Kang Yu has long been a demon, he could control his thirst to some extent, but in their case, it was different.

There was probably no one among them now who is mentally adequate.

‘How do they get Magi?’ Maybe they had the Devourer’s Power to safely fill a body with Magi.

But originally Magi is not meant for mortal humans, as it destroys both the soul and the body.

‘I’ll wait for the ritual first.’ Kang Yu, pretending to be unconscious, lay on the altar to watch the ritual take place.

— Prepare the mana stones.

— Yes!

The guy who placed the victim’s body on the altar opened the safe underneath it.

There were over a thousand mana stones inside.

‘What will they do?’ He became even more curious about how the ritual was performed.

Standing in front of the altar, Dok Hyun hit the ground with his dark brown staff and started reading the mantra.

Maryok, who was imprisoned in the Mana stone, broke out and formed a slight split in the air.

After squinting, Kang Yu saw the split and a small shiver broke through him.

Through this split, Magi piled up in the air.

‘What the hell?’ He was very familiar with the rift.

‘Why the hell is there Magi from the Nine Thousandth Circle of Hell?’ A question that Kang Yu had no answer to.

And how they created this split was also unclear.

He was completely confused and could only watch what was going on.

Dok Hyun directed the Magi that spilled from the split into Kang Yu’s body.

‘What?’ The flowing Magi from the split began to flow into his body.

His Devourer’s Power began to draw in energy as usual.

There was a notice.

[Magi increased by 1 unit]

This was a surprise that cannot be denied.

Kang Yu continued to draw in the Magi flowing from the split.

‘Nice.’ Kang Yu understood why they were directing Magi from a split into a victim.

All they have to do is wait for the Magi to absorb the spirit and body of the victim, which is why the victim will end up dying.

‘But then how to get the Magi out of the body is a mystery.’ Anyway, it wasn’t really a big deal for Kang Yu.

Because for him, Magi wasn’t poison, it was more like sweet honey.

The notifications kept coming one by one.

‘It’s rising fast!’ His body received many times as much Magi as he had in the day with his own Devourer’s Power.

The corners of his lips unwittingly rose with the incoming Magi.

— What the hell? — Kang Yu heard Dok Hyun’s excited voice, which seemed to be starting to guess something. — Why isn’t he stopping? —

‘You can’t stop this.’

— Mi... wait a minute.

‘A little more.’

— Stop!!!

‘Don’t stop.’

— Stop it!

‘One more unit.’

Dok Hyun's panic voice and Kang Yu's thoughts merged into a scream.

Everything has an end.

The mana stones supporting the rift lost all their power, and eventually, the rift disappeared on its own.

With disappointment weighing in his heart, he opened his eyes and started to move and show signs of life.

Now he had a rough idea of what the ritual was. And now it was time to hear more information from Dok Hyun himself.

— How... how? — He was shivering when he looked at Kang Yu, who had absorbed all that power without getting hurt.

— Can we do the ritual one more time?

— Ahhhhh! — Dok Hyun was shaken up.

He couldn't imagine how a simple guy could draw all that energy into himself and stay in his right mind.

But one thing was clear — he had used up all the mana stones they had that his followers had obtained. And Dok Hyun himself didn't receive any of that power.

— No way. — All the energy they had accumulated in the mana stones was meant to kill the victim and give Dok Hyun immortality.

Hwaran's Squad was always watching Andras Guild closely, so it would take several more years to collect so many mana stones again without attracting their attention.

— Uh... uh! — Dok Hyun's scream spread all over the room.

He glared angrily at Kang Yu.

— Oh, you lousy dude! — He stretched his brown staff forward, and at the end of it appeared a ball of concentrated Magi directed at Kang Yu.

Kang Yu dodged the charge with ease.

The ball hit the wall and exploded with force, making a loud sound.

When Kang Yu saw that explosion, Kang Yu looked at Dok Hyun with interest.

‘Pretty powerful.’ Either because of Magi or Dok Hyun’s skills as a Player, but he could keep releasing powerful charges without interruption.

Those charges, which were sent to Kang Yu when he got there, spun into the air and then turned around and flew back.

‘The Power of the Iron Curtain.’ Kang Yu’s Magi wrapped around him like armor.

The charges issued by Dok Hyun were repelled by Kang Yu’s armor and flew back.

‘The more Magi there is, the more comfortable it is.’ He’d gotten a lot of Magi on rank 3.

And taking into account that it hasn’t even been a week since his return, it was encouraging.

Kang Yu continued to use Magi with a happy look.

— Are... Are you saying that you have Magi? — Dok Hyun was stunned to see the victim who not only survived the ritual and felt normal but also knew how to handle Magi.

It couldn’t be.

No, that’s something that shouldn’t have happened.

With an anxious look, he changed tactics.

— What are you looking at?! Attack him! — Dok Hyun screamed as he turned to the guild members.

When they heard the order, each of the eight members of the guild, using Magi, ran towards Kang Yu.

Looking at the running followers, Kang Yu smiled a bit.

‘They don’t know how to use the Magi properly.’ They certainly couldn’t be considered

proper opponents.

Kang Yu was like a wolf among a flock of sheep.

They were desperate to point their weapons at Kang Yu, but it was impossible to pierce the Magi's armor.

His defense was impenetrable, so all that was left was to concentrate on his attack.

For that, he used the Iron Curtain Power and Blade Power at the same time.

'A lot of Magi will be spent...' It was hard to support two Forces at once, given that just the armor itself required a lot of Magi.

'We have to finish this quickly,' Kang Yu thought and took action.

There was no problem with most of the opponents.

In Hell's Nine Thousandth Circle, before meeting Pallock, he'd been all alone, so he was used to fighting demons face to face.

— Aah! My hand!

— Hah!... my leg!

In battle, the main thing was not to take the enemy's life. At times it was better to strike a powerful blow to deny the enemy the chance to fight rather than killing them.

The wounded members of the guild became a hindrance to their own army, giving Kang Yu the space to fight.

— Aaaah!

A member of the guild rushed forward, ready to attack Kang Yu from behind, but his attack was repulsed and his shoulder became badly injured.

The black blade pierced his shoulder and crushed his bones, causing a wild scream.

'Four.' Not even three minutes into the battle, and half of the guild was already broken.

If this went on, it wouldn't be difficult to deal with the entire guild of Andras.

— Out of my way, you useless creatures! — Dok Hyun screamed.

Following the order, the remaining four members of the guild stepped back and looked at Dok Hyun with a look full of faith.

— He's finally using it.

— The power of the great founder.

Dok Hyun stepped forward, accompanied by the waiting gaze of his followers.

— Look at it! It's the fire that burns life, the Power of Hellfire! — Dok Hyun, full of confidence, pulled one hand forward.

His palms were fluttering with black flames.

— Ha... — Kang Yu looked at the fire burning on his hand and smiled. — You call this the Power of Hellfire? —

Ridiculous.

There's no way that could be called hellfire.

The Hellfire created with the power of Hell must burn, it must be insatiable.

The fire created by Dok Hyun was like something sloppy, created in a hurry, and only a little like Hellfire.

— I don't know how you can control the Magi, but you can't use this power... — Before Dok Hyun finished, Kang Yu's hand flashed with blazing black fire.

The flames danced from Kang Yu's hand to the ground.

Now, Dok Hyun's fire seemed very insignificant.

— A...? — Dok Hyun looked stupefied.

'No way.' That was when he realized he'd made a big mistake.

CHAPTER 23

DEMON FOLLOWERS (2)

— What... what the hell... — Dok Hyun could hardly speak coherently.

In the hands of the guy who was supposed to be the victim, the same Hellfire burned.

No, it's not the same.

It only looked like his flame but was actually something else, something more powerful.

'He can't be defeated.' Dok Hyun's eyes were wide.

It was impossible to penetrate Kang Yu's armor too.

Dok Hyun's confidence that he could defeat Kang Yu was evaporating at the speed of light.

He turned pale and trembled even harder.

There was an undisguised alarm in his eyes.

'What should I do...?' The impossibility of winning was already an undeniable fact.

Kang Yu wouldn't even have to move a step to fight — Hellfire will do everything for him.

Sweat trailed down Dok Hyun's forehead. Now that he didn't know what to do, he was fighting internally against himself.

Kang Yu watched the trembling founder of the guild with interest.

'What will he do?' It was clear from his appearance that he had already guessed that he couldn't win, so his next action would be key.

The curiosity didn't last long.

After a moment of reflection, Dok Hyun suddenly fell to his knees and stretched both hands to the ground.

— O Great!!!

— A?

— We waited for the Great to come down from heaven to us!

Dok Hyun seemed to be crazy, saying such phrases loudly. Kang Yu grinned involuntarily.

— Huh.

— You are our Lord, Messiah, and God! By leading this world, you can be despotic to us!

Dok Hyun continued his speeches with Kang Yu's smile.

'That guy...' He was clearly trying to lie.

Kang Yu looked at Dok Hyun with a ridiculous look on his face, who obviously understood the hopelessness of the situation and adapted to it.

Kang Yu, of course, expected some action from him, but not this.

— Oh, Great Andras! I knew it was you from the moment I saw you!

'Is that who I'm supposed to be?'

— You can't imagine how long we waited for you!

'You weren't.'

— I can feel my heart ready to burst with joy!

'That's enough nonsense.'

Kang Yu was dumbfounded by Dok Hyun's good acting skills.

— What are you doing?! Bow down quickly to the Great One! This man is capable of

giving us eternal life!

— Wha... Ah, yes.

— Quickly! — Dok Hyun shouted at the guild members who couldn't understand anything.

They started to fall to their knees, looking at each other in perplexity.

Kang Yu grinned at Andras's followers bowing before him.

'Unusual guys.' It's really hard to throw away your pride and kneel like this in front of a stranger.

Kang Yu was almost able to feel respect towards Dok Hyun for this idea.

'That's not bad.' Kang Yu smiled a little at him.

He didn't hate pathetic people.

On the contrary, he would have hated them if they hadn't bowed to him in such a clearly defeated situation.

That's why Kang Yu liked them — they were ready to forget about their pride and lower their heads to survive.

'You can't lose this opportunity.' Kang Yu felt interested and took a step forward.

— Hahaha! You finally recognized me! I'm Andras! Lord of all demons and Lord of Hellfire, — Kang Yu said loudly, surrounded by the Magi.

Half of his words were lies.

He did not have enough Magi to be the Lord of all demons, as he was.

And no, Kang Yu certainly wasn't Andras.

The only truth in what was said was that he ruled the Hellfire.

— Oh, Lord of all demons! Lord of Hellfire! Hooray for Andras!

But Dok Hyun, who doesn't know the truth, bowed his head to the floor with praises.

He uttered all these phrases so passionately that an ignorant person would think Kang Yu was someone highly regarded.

'Of course I'm not.' It was just a cold calculation from Dok Hyun, who understood that he couldn't win this battle.

Kang Yu smiled and sat down untidily on the altar.

'But it's not that important.' What was really important was Dok Hyun's submission. And the fact that Kang Yu had things he wanted to learn from him.

— Let everyone else go. I have something to discuss with you.

— Got it!

He called out to the followers who had stumbled into the ground and pointed them out.

They lifted their wounded comrades from the ground and went outside.

Left alone with Dok Hyun, Kang Yu said in a calm voice:

— Well, I have a few questions.

— Ask anything, great And...

— Enough with the chatter. You know very well I'm not Andras.

With his lips pressed tightly, Dok Hyun cast a cold glance towards Kang Yu.

— So, who are you?

— I'm the one who asks the questions.

Dok Hyun bit his lip.

— First, the ritual. How is that possible? How did you know it was possible to create a split with the help of Maryok, which is extracted from the mana stones?

The most important thing right now was to find out how it creates a split.

It would be strange if creating a rift was his special ability.

Dok Hyun looked around and answered in a quiet voice:

— I learned to do this by getting a mission.

— A mission?

— Yes, I did.

— What kind of mission?

— I once met a demon in the disguise of a young man. He promised to grant immortality if I accepted the teachings and followed the Devil's Teacher.

— And you accepted his offer? — Kang Yu looked at Dok Hyun with bewilderment.

What kind of crazy person would accept such a crazy offer?

— He... he was very strong.

— He was strong?

— That's right. In a moment, he took over our entire guild. And... he said either follow him or die. I followed him in despair!

— Where is he now?

— I... I don't know. I've never seen him again since that day.

— You've never seen him?

— Yes, that's right.

— And there's no contact?

— No. He only sends orders through letters sometimes.

— Hmm.

— You're pretty active in following his teachings.

— Ah! That's...

Dok Hyun shivered and looked away.

Kang Yu squinted and looked closely at Dok Hyun.

'It's possible that at some point he started to like it and decided to continue with the rites.' He was probably forced to do so at first, but then, feeling the sweet power, anyone could well succumb to the temptation.

'Who's the Devil's Teacher?'

The name of the founder of this pseudo-religion sounded extremely ridiculous, but he had huge power.

Usually in the beginning, those who learn to create a rift do not have powerful powers.

Kang Yu turned to Dok Hyun.

— Where are those letters with orders?

— Here they are.

— What are they...? Just one?

— Yes, I think so.

Dok Hyun, while continuing to act like a victim, looked sad.

— Hmm. Well, let's see. — Kang Yu's eyes narrowed as he cupped his chin in deep thought. — You're the only one who got the mission from the so-called Devil's Teacher? —

— I... I don't know. I haven't met other people, — said Dok Hyun in a trembling voice and nodded.

Kang Yu looked at him and clicked his tongue.

‘He can’t be the only one.’ Kang Yu didn’t know who the Devil’s Teacher was or if Dok Hyun knew about his plans.

But he knew for sure that if he believed Dok Hyun’s words alone, he couldn’t make plans, because he wasn’t stupid and he wasn’t weak.

At the same time, he seemed neither talentless nor talented.

He wasn’t a person strong enough to create a rift on his own.

‘There must be someone else.’

A mysterious demon with people who worshipped him.

Kang Yu thought that somewhere, there must be followers like Dok Hyun who secretly perform rites.

While in doubt, Kang Yu snapped his tongue.

— So what’s the only order this teacher gave you? To receive Magi through the ritual and become stronger?

— No...

— Then what?

— Convert as many Players as possible into demons in human form. He said that this way he could turn the Earth into hell...

Kang Yu wasn’t happy with what he heard.

‘To turn Players into demons through the Magi.’

It wasn’t clear what the Devil’s Teachers were waiting for or where. And the intention of making Players into demons was still a mystery, too.

But one thing was for sure.

‘Those bastards...’ Kang Yu’s face turned sour. ‘...are going to create Hell on Earth?’

It was not something that could be done with a single wish.

CHAPTER 24

DEMON FOLLOWERS (3)

— Learn more about the Devil's Teacher.

— I... got it.

After listening to Kang Yu, Dok Hyun bowed.

He looked at Kang Yu with a fear that was impossible to hide.

It wasn't just fear, it was something that made Dok Hyun fall on his knees.

It was proof that the Force of Fear worked properly.

— And don't perform any more rituals. Do you understand?

— Got it! — Dok Hyun hurriedly threw his head on the floor in submission.

Kang Yu, satisfied with the answer he received, smiled and nodded.

'He's under control to the necessary degree.' He couldn't allow the Players to be further kidnapped and sacrificed for rituals.

Firstly, it was a matter of morality, secondly, and more importantly, the deterioration of the guild.

If the guild continues to act in the same way, they, already under strict observation, will certainly be caught.

'Even though they are hiding, they will be raided sooner or later.' Even if they stop all activity, they would be targeted cruelly by the enemies they'd made. There were simply too many horrible things they'd done.

Too many people have gone missing because of them. The guild members wouldn't go unpunished.

‘They’re not allowed to get caught now.’ Kang Yu needed to learn about the Devil’s Teacher.

All the people here have knowledge of Magi and own it.

Not in the society of ordinary Players, but among knowledgeable people, the probability of finding the Devil’s Teacher was increasing.

If that person decided government units were getting too close to the guild, he could just disappear.

Kang Yu, with a tired look, stood up from the altar.

He felt overwhelmed. Probably because he’d been using different forces for a long time.

‘I should rest,’ he thought he’d done too much in one day. He was able to hunt and ‘get to know’ the Andras Guild. He needed a break.

‘I’d like to rest now.’ Kang Yu’s gaze shone.

He knew a great way to relax.

The corners of his lips stretched out with a wide smile and his gait became light.

Kang Yu followed the familiar route to Han Sol’s house, singing a melody on the way.

— Let’s go get kimchi jjigae! — The mere thought of kimchi jjigae seemed to have evaporated his depression and fatigue.

Kang Yu, using Magi’s remnants, used the Power of Heaven and went up in the air.

* * *

— Ka... Kang Yu! — As soon as he opened the door, an anxious Han Sol ran up to him.

When Kang Yu saw her like that, he cocked his head to his side.

— Did something happen?

— That's what I want to ask you! It's been so long since you entered the gate and didn't even call... You didn't even pick up the phone!

— Ah... — He'd returned much later than usual because of the guild visit after the hunt. — I'm sorry, there were important things to do. —

— Ugh, I was beginning to worry if something had happened, — Han Sol put her hand to her chest and sighed with relief.

Looking at how worried she was, Kang Yu smiled a little.

— Thank you for your concern. Next time, I'll be sure to warn you.

— Ho... okay. — Kang Yu's sincere response made her cheeks flush red and she looked away in embarrassment.

— Everyone's home, so it's time for dinner. What do you want to eat?

— Kimchi jjigae! — Kang Yu answered without a doubt.

— Ah... as expected, Han Sol laughed with her mouth covered. She was really expecting that answer.

— If that's all right.

— Of course, I just bought some good meat.

— Yes!

— And all with your help.

Thanks to Kang Yu's money, their financial situation at home had improved significantly.

Of course, he didn't give her all the money he earned.

Since the Players earn many times as much as ordinary people, by giving away only a part of the money he earned, the family's financial situation had already improved considerably.

— It's nothing compared to having a good dinner in good company. When you need

more, say it right away.

— Oh, no! I've been promoted to rank two, so now I have the opportunity to earn my money and pay you back.

— Oh~ — Kang Yu looked at her with interest. — When did you get promoted to rank 2? —

— We were hunting goblins today to raise our level.

There was joy in her face for achieving what she wanted, and she hopped a little in excitement, her breasts bouncing slightly.

His head filled with thoughts.

Kang Yu looked away from Han Seol to get rid of the mental anguish.

A few moments later, taking control of his thoughts and feelings, he looked at the girl again.

— And the special ability you have is in what class?

— Hmm... You won't believe it, Kang Yu. — Her gaze shone and her voice trembled. — I have a Class B ability! With rank 2, I got an ability called 'Shining Happiness'.—

— Wow! — Kang Yu reacted to her words with a shout of admiration.

Kang Yu was sincerely delighted with this high-grade special ability, which will make her great support.

'She and Dae Su will form a good party.' A tank and support with special abilities of high levels.

Even if it's just the two of them, a fully staffed party would envy them.

And Kang Yu, in light of recent events related to the Andras Guild, decided it was necessary to increase his strength and influence.

'I don't know how strong these Devil's Teachers are.' To gain strength for the upcoming battle was not such a bad idea.

— Han Sol, did you get many invitations from the guilds?

— Yes, a lot, — she said in an excited tone, still in disbelief that she had received a B-grade ability.

Actually, the B-class feature wasn't that rare.

But given that she was a support, her value was more.

— Which guild are you going to join?

— Well... — The question made her cheeks brown, and she hesitantly continued: — Actually, I don't want to join the guild. I'd like to help you. —

— Hmm... — When Kang Yu heard her answer, he swallowed nervously. When he doubted it, he said quietly, — It's true that you've gained the ability of a high class, but it's not a good idea to walk with me yet.—

— Ahh... — Realizing that his decision was undeniable, Han Sol felt disappointed.

— I'll tell you what, there's nothing you can do for me now.

— I see, — the girl replied sluggishly with her head down.

When Kang Yu looked at her acting this way, he felt his heart twinge with sympathy.

'It's just too early.' She can't help him now. If she wouldn't be a hindrance to him, it'd already be a great achievement.

It wasn't that she was weak. Her abilities are many times better than those of ordinary Players.

'The problem is, I'm gaining strength too quickly.'

Having risen to rank 3 and received a decent amount of Magi through the ritual, he surely overcame level 20 long ago.

Given that he had huge powers for his level, it would be inconvenient to share the much-needed experience points with teammates.

‘A little later.’ Once he reaches gate level B, where ‘elite’ monsters live, it should be fine.

That’s when he would go hunting in a party with Dae Su, Han Sol, and possibly someone else. But not now.

Right now, Han Sol and Dae Su need to gain combat experience.

‘Once you’ve entered a powerful party, you can’t get that experience.’ Of course, there’s no need to practice risking your life, but just standing next to stronger party members and getting experience points will not teach you how to fight against the monsters.

— I know a tank with the ability of class A. First, you should be in the same party as him to gain experience.

— I see...

— A little later, when you become more experienced and raise your level, we will go together to the high-level gates.

— Ah! — When she heard that she could join a party with Kang Yu, her eyes lit up immediately.

They will hunt together as soon as she gets stronger.

For her, who has both an interest in Kang Yu and a sense of loyalty to Kang Yu, such words have become her motivation.

— I see. As you said, I’ll join the tank’s party.

— Since you two have high-level abilities, you’ll improve quite quickly.

— Yes, I’d like to quickly gain experience and go with you.

— It won’t take long. I’ll provide the necessary help, — Kang Yu planned to personally go out hunting with Dae Su and Han Sol after a while to help them get promoted.

If Kang Yu, who already has the strength of a high-class player, helps them, they will be promoted many times faster than other players.

‘It’s an investment in the future.’ In Hell’s Nine Thousandth Circle when he accepted

Pallock as a servant, he had realized something.

If you do what you're used to doing as a couple or a three-person group, you won't have to wait as long for the result.

Of course, 'realized' may seem too much as it should be an obvious fact, but for Kang Yu who is used to doing things alone, it had been a real shock.

'Before Pallock, I thought that a servant would be a burden.' He simply hadn't had the opportunity to understand that a person with special skills could be very useful.

— Haha, thank you, Kang Yu. Time passed so quickly during the conversation. Wait a bit for me to finish cooking.

— Okay.

While thinking about when to start helping Dae Su and Han Sol, he went into the living room and sat down waiting for dinner.

— Uwah! — When he saw the kimchi jjigae, he noisily sucked in the air and approached the girl.

Probably because of the expensive kimchi jjigae meat, this time he was very attracted to the shiny broth.

— Looks delicious!

— Ah, wait a minute, Kang Yu. — The girl stopped Kang Yu, who was ready to attack the dish like a predator.

He became upset, looking sadly at the tantalizing kimchi jjigae that she wouldn't let him eat and then at Han Sol.

She thought it was quite funny to see him like that and giggled.

— Today, we'll add this to the kimchi jjigae.' She dipped the cooked food into the broth.

His pupils dilated and his body shuddered.

— That's... — Kang Yu panicked as if he had seen something incredible.

It was as if he felt a lightning strike spreading all over his body.

— Ramen!

Kang Yu shuddered and looked at the kimchi jjigae.

‘I don’t know who you are...’ He remembered the Devil’s Teachers making great plans for this planet, ‘but I will protect the Earth from you.

Kang Yu dove into the ramen before it was fully ready, and decided to save this planet for himself.

CHAPTER 25

AN UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTER (1)

— We will send your Level C Player ID tomorrow to the specified address.

— Um... Can't you give it to me right now?

— No. Starting at level C, screening of mana stones are more thorough. That's why we don't issue IDs right away.

— Oh, I see.

Earlier this morning, right after breakfast with Han Sol, Kang Yu had headed straight to the Players' Control Office to get his Level C Gate ID.

He'd already provided the required number of mana stones, if not more.

When he walked into the building, he had first gone to the measuring machine to confirm his level and rank before attempting to receive his ID.

But there, he was told to wait for another day for his ID to be processed and delivered, which wasn't too surprising.

'I was going to go straight to the Level C Gate.' Initially he was going to rest for a while after receiving the 3rd rank, but meeting with the Demon followers radically changed his plans.

He needed to find out who the Demon Teachers were, what their goal was, and how strong they were. Until then, he needed to accumulate even more strength.

— Hm... — Kang Yu thought about going to the gate because of his newly acquired Magi. Since his Magi level was much higher now, it would be much easier to use different Powers.

'I should slow down.' Kang Yu nodded confidently, overcoming his doubts.

The Demon Teachers didn't seem to be acting right now, and it would take time to find them anyway.

You shouldn't relax too much, but you don't have to rush forward.

'Perhaps it is better to take a break as planned.' Considering the current situation, it was worth it to take a break and enjoy his stay on Earth. 'Come to think about it, I haven't rested a day since I got back on Earth.'

There were many things he'd wanted to do upon returning to Earth, but he had done nothing but fight in the end.

Kang Yu was suddenly seized by a passionate desire to rest.

'But...' Upon leaving the building in the city center, he was surrounded by a stream of people going about their business. 'What shall I do?'

Kang Yu scratched the back of his head as he thought about it. In fact, he was a person far from fun.

Since he used to live quite poorly, all his activities were limited to going to restaurants and reading comics on his phone at night. And to avoid spending more money than necessary, he had chosen free comics every time.

And of course there was nothing to mention about the time spent in Hell.

He often dreamed of coming back to Earth, but never once did he wonder what he would do here.

Maybe it's just a matter of remembering the past.

— Eh... — Kang Yu sat down at the nearest shop, immersed in his own thoughts.

'If you think about it like that, I've really lived a crazy boring life.' As he tried to remember what kinds of fun experiences he's had, nothing came to mind.

— Hmm... A chicken or something to eat... — He drooled when he remembered the chicken and beer combo he'd recently had.

Han Sol cooked so deliciously that he couldn't imagine eating food prepared by anyone

else, but that chicken was an exception.

‘Except it’s a little early to eat.’ He’d left the house early in the morning.

So it was still a long time before lunchtime.

He could hardly find a decent place that serves chicken and beer first thing in the morning.

— Ah! — At that moment, Kang Yu came up with an idea.

There was something he hadn’t tried before. It was a place that others often went to, while he had always envied them.

— Yes. I should go at least once. — Excited, he hastily got up and left the shop.

Kang Yu looked around. If he remembered correctly, there were many places like that in the center.

‘I found it.’ When he saw the sign, his eyes sparkled.

Quickly, almost running, he went towards the sign.

[PC Bang*. Death is like the wind that always surrounds me]

(P.P.: PC Bang — internet cafe, computer room. In Korea, such places are equipped with powerful gaming computers and a headset. Payment is made by the hour. You can also buy food and drinks there).

— Finally! — Kang Yu exclaimed, looking at the sign.

He’d grown up watching his peers regularly visit PC Bang ever since he was a child, and he was madly jealous of them.

When he grew up and got a job, he couldn’t even think about going to a place like this because he had been so busy.

‘Just once, I want to try spending time at a place like this.’

In ten thousand years, he’s experienced all kinds of torment.

While in Hell, he'd never suffered a life-threatening injury.

Now that he was on Earth, he felt it was necessary to be compensated for all the suffering he had endured.

He had suffered all sorts of torments, but he had hardly had a taste of 'fun.' He planned to try everything he hadn't had a chance to before.

— It's time to go, — Kang Yu said, his voice resembling a hero ascending the battlefield as he opened the door.

The bell hanging from the door sounded when the door opened.

— Well, let's see. Do you have to register first and make a deposit?

For a man who came to a place like this for the first time, he quickly realized what he needed to do, registered, and went in under his name.

But after almost every successful action he joyfully exclaimed, as if he had just arrived from the village to the capital.

On the opened desktop, he clicked on the tab with drinks and food.

— Oh... Is this where you can order food? — The neatly decorated menu resembled an online grocery store.

After moments of hesitation, Kang Yu chose set A.

'They say if you're at PC Bang, you should take ramen.' He'd always heard that the atmosphere here gives the ramen a very special flavour.

— Well... — Once he ordered the ramen, he moved to the games tab.

But for him, a man who's never played video games, the choice wasn't so easy.

'I need to have at least a general idea about all these games.' He flipped through the list and stopped at one of the most popular games.

By clicking on the icon with the capital letter 'L', a login window appeared.

— Huh? — Right after registration, an advertisement came up.

[Initial set: 5 runes, 10k IP, upgrade to level 30!]

— Ha! — Just below was shown a colorful box with all the above and indicated the cost.

‘Start at level 30, of course, is better,’ Kang Yu had no idea what kind of game it was and what to do, but the high level was clearly an advantage.

After paying for the initial set, Kang Yu entered the game.

— Support... No, I should choose someone more independent... — Kang Yu tilted his head to the side and chose a character.

In the end, he chose a magician who could control the wind.

‘Should we go that way?’ Kang Yu ran after his teammate with golden hair down the map.

1 minute and 30 seconds passed from the start of the game, and monsters started to appear in two camps. He had one teammate, a blond, and there were two players on the opposing team too.

‘Yeah, if you get a monster, you get a monetary reward.’ Kang Yu figured it out pretty quickly.

When Kang Yu realized the value of killing monsters, he started to click on the mouse and catch monsters faster.

At that moment, a guy with golden hair wrote to the chat room:

“Why do you want to kill them?”

Kang Yu tilted his head and looked at the message with bewilderment.

[jjanna: They give you money when you kill them.]

“It’s not what you should be doing, *****”

[jjanna: You can kill them too, so you’ll earn money.]

“well, you and *** so that you *** your mother *** you ***.”

Kang Yu didn't understand why, but his teammate was very unhappy.

— For set A, the price is 4000 won.

— Ah, thank you. — Kang Yu took his ramen and passed the employee the money.

Looking at the steaming ramen, his eyes caught fire with passion.

‘Smells familiar.’ Ramen was the food he ate day after day during his poverty days.

He thought he'd never eat a regular ramen again, but here it felt different, more delicious than ever.

Kang Yu pierced the yolk of a framed egg with chopsticks and started pulling noodles with an appetite.

A unique, slightly exotic flavor spread throughout his mouth.

‘Delicious!’ —Kang Yu moved his character to a safe place, and the game screen turned sideways.

— Oh, the pickled radish is perfect for the ramen! — Kang Yu exclaimed in admiration, snacking on the ramen with the included radish.

Of course, the radish is no match for kimchi, but at this point, it had a certain charm.

Kang Yu with a happy smile put a piece of kimbap in his mouth.

(P.P.: Kimbap is Korean rolls in which no fish is added, with the rare exception of salad tuna).

itsreal: “Move already! Please! I'm going up after this game!”

Even though his teammate continued to write in the chat room, Kang Yu, focused on the ramen, didn't notice it.

— It's not that interesting.

Maybe he thought so because he'd never played a game before, but he really thought this place was useless.

— But the food is delicious. — More than the games this place is designed for, he liked the ramen here.

For the sake of ramen, Kang Yu thought about coming here again.

When Kang Yu finished cleaning up the bowl of ramen, he opened a bottle of soda and drank it in a flash. The cool, pleasant drink spread all over Kang Yu's throat.

At that moment, behind Kang Yu, there was an angry scream:

— Who's that bastard under the name of jjanna? A?!

Turning towards the scream, Kang Yu saw a girl with a short haircut, dressed in a baseball cap and standing up sharply.

Thick eyebrows and chubby lips, high nose, and snow-white skin.

Dressed in a tracksuit and cap, she looked pretty short, but that didn't make her any less beautiful.

Kang Yu faced her with a look.

She curved her face and shouted rudely:

— What are you staring at? Is there something wrong with that? I'm not in the best mood, so don't talk to me...

She suddenly stopped talking when she saw the image on Kang Yu's monitor.

— Huh? — Not believing her eyes, she looked first at her monitor and then at Kang Yu's monitor and back.

When she kept looking back and forth, she smiled unhappily.

— Wow, what a coincidence. — Her body started to emit strong energy. — Oh, you bastard! I told you nicely... —

CHAPTER 26

AN UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTER (2)

— I already told you nicely, — said the girl with the red short hair.

However, it was more like the angry growling of a beast.

— Huh? What are you talking about? — Kang Yu was surprised to look at the girl who was suddenly angry with him.

Her face blushed with anger and tendons appeared on her neck.

— What? You're kidding me! — She pointed towards Kang Yu, shouting even louder.

The girl swung her hand in preparation to attack Kang Yu.

He frowned and dodged her attack.

— Huh? — The girl was surprised that the guy could avoid her attack.

Her eyes were wide, and she looked at Kang Yu closely.

— What the hell...?

He kept dodging all her attacks.

His skillful dodging of strikes with just one body movement was more like a well-prepared circus performance.

— Phew... — A girl who couldn't believe her eyes was looking at Kang Yu dodging each attack.

But it wasn't just her who was surprised. Kang Yu also looked at the girl with perplexity.

'She's fast.' Kang Yu was focused on her hands trying to strike.

It was fast. No, it wasn't just fast. She attacked like a real snake, not in a straight line, but by drawing a curve. Her attack technique was excellent.

'She's strong.' Kang Yu got up from the chair, looking at the girl with a cold analysis.

She was stronger than all the people he'd seen on Earth before.

Compared to her, even Dok Hyun looked pathetic.

'Maybe...' Kang Yu thought that she might well be stronger than himself.

Neither were fighting at full potential, but the Maryok she was using was very well capable of making Kang Yu gasp for air.

— Who are you? — Kang Yu wasn't the only one who became interested in his opponent.

The girl with red hair, watching Kang Yu dodge her blows so swiftly and naturally lowered her voice and continued:

— Are you from some kind of guild? The guild of 'World'?

— I don't know what you mean.

— Are you fooling around? — Her cold look pierced Kang Yu. — Are you saying you don't belong to any guild? You're not? —

She put even more effort into the strikes. Of course, because it was only a game, she wasn't planning to hurt him too much.

But at the moment it wasn't the level of attack that a man who didn't belong to any guild could avoid.

— Do I have to join a guild?

She didn't say anything.

— On the contrary, I have questions for you. Who are you? Why are you picking on me?

— You know it very well!

— I can assume it was you who cursed in the chat room.

— Of course, I did! How can you not swear in this situation?! — the girl screamed again, and fire flared in her eyes. She was so angry about what happened, she threw her keyboard in the air.

When Kang Yu saw that reaction, he shrugged his shoulders.

‘Maybe it was because I was just standing there.’ He nodded lightly, remembering that he stopped playing and focused on the ramen.

— Sorry for dropping the game in the middle. It’s just that they brought me ramen.

— The problem is what happened before!

— Mm-hmm? Didn’t you know that money is given for killing monsters?

— No, I didn’t! That’s not the problem! — She was angry and tired of looking at Kang Yu at the same time.

Kang Yu, unable to understand the reason for her behavior, bent his head to a side.

When she saw his reaction, she frowned and asked:

— It’s not the first time you’ve played, is it?

— It’s the first time.

— A... ha... — the red-haired girl touched her forehead as if she had a headache.

He didn’t look like he was lying.

‘Rookie kid...’

— So, you really don’t know how to play?

— I don’t.

— Um... — She took a deep breath.

He just doesn't know how to play, and she kept getting mad at him the whole time.

— So, who are you? I haven't seen you among those who got a level A game ID.

— I'm not a Level A Player.

— You are, aren't you? — The red-haired girl looked at him with a questioning look.

'It can't be.' She hadn't used her full strength, but she didn't believe he could be below level A.

— Don't lie. You can't be any weaker than level A.

— Here, look. — Kang Yu gave her his Player ID.

Because he had just ordered a Level C card today, it still said that he had a Level D gate clearance.

— A Level D gate? — She looked completely lost, like Kang Yu, who showed her ID, was making fun of her. — How is that possible at level D? —

She was completely confused.

In fact, all she saw was his mobility.

That's why the guess about Level A was based solely on his defense skill.

'But level D is only the beginning.' A player who can compete with experienced fighters and has level D — she couldn't believe it.

— Well, I guess we won't see each other again.

— Ah...

With those words, Kang Yu returned to his computer seat to pick up his things. Today was his long-awaited weekend after returning to Earth. He didn't want to waste his precious free time on useless quarrels.

— Really... — said the girl as she extended her hand to Kang Yu.

The guy, ignoring her, slowly went outside.

And she left alone in complete silence, looked at the front door with a stupefied look.

Oh Kang Yu's name, written on his ID card, was left in her head.

A player with such agility that it didn't fit into level D.

'Is he just hiding his powers?' She even thought about the possibility of him committing a crime and changing his ID and hiding from the law. 'But that's weird, too.'

A player with a fake identity wouldn't walk around like this during the day, more so in PC Bang, especially not far from the Players Control Department.

— Or... — she squinted and looked at the place where Kang Yu was sitting before that.

His seat, for a man who was repulsing the attack, was incredibly clean.

That's because he only avoided being hit by his upper body.

'He is probably a genius with certain talents,' After all, each person has a different sense of battle.

If he really is a genius, he could have learned it in a few fights with professionals.

'Who is he?' She had a huge desire to learn more about Kang Yu.

To be more precise, she wanted to know if he was a genius with outstanding abilities.

'If that's really the case... ' Her eyes glistened coldly.

If her guess checks out, he could be the key to solving her problems.

'But first I must make sure.'

She took the phone out of her inner pocket and called someone.

— Head of the team in the Red Rose guild, Park Hyun Woo.

— Hyun Woo, this is Young-Ju.

— Is something wrong, Commander?

— There's a Player who I want to learn more about.

— Hmm... Is this about the Demon followers?

— Ah, no.

— Give me the information, I'll find out everything.

— I'll be at the guild's office soon. — She hung up, still wondering about Kang Yu, and headed out.

At that moment, her monitor with the word 'defeat' glowing on it came into her sight.

— Ah... — She started to feel angry with Kang Yu again.

Frowning, she pressed the 'confirm' button.

[Promotion to Silver Failed]

— Aaaah! If I get him again, I won't just let him go! — The red-haired girl named Chae Young-Ju screamed angrily when she saw her bronze rank.

* * *

— Ugh. — Kang Yu took a deep breath when he left the building.

'She's strong.' Though it had been more like an equal confrontation.

What happened now could have been called a battle to determine the level of the enemy.

It was likely that if she had done her best, she would have been able to defeat him.

'It's quite possible.' Kang Yu felt such a powerful flow of Maryok coming from her body when he fought the girl. The expression on his face became serious.

Having reached rank 3 and receiving more from the Andras Guild than expected, he had gained great confidence in himself that he could not lose to ordinary Players.

‘But that wasn’t enough.’ Excessive self-confidence gives rise to unconcern. A carelessness capable of inducing karma.

‘Well, I’ll be even busier starting tomorrow.’ Kang Yu was heading towards the station to take the subway.

He wanted to rest today, but meeting the red-haired girl changed his plans.

‘That’s fine.’ He’d rather have his confidence shaken when meeting another Player like that on a casual day than during a real fight.

* * *

After receiving a level C player’s certificate the next day, Kang Yu immediately went to the gate in the district of Maokdong.

Among the multi-story buildings in a row, there seemed to be space.

— Where is the gate...

Kang Yu took out his phone and looked online to see what monsters were waiting for him.

‘Orcs and trolls mixed together.’ The orcs resembled D-level cannibals but appeared at a higher level gate.

Kang Yu, who finally found the entrance and read all the information, wanted to enter the gate, but a man in uniform came up to him and stopped him.

— Today, only groups of more than five people can enter the gate.

— Why is that?

— The boss showed up today. When the boss shows up, no single entry is allowed.

Kang Yu didn’t say anything.

The boss of the trolls.

Sometimes, there were ‘elite’ monsters at the Level C Gate that were superior to even

Level B monsters.

— Hmm. — Kang Yu rubbed his chin and looked at the gate thoughtfully.

He looked at the gate thoughtfully. 'A reason to be excited.' A troll boss appeared at level C.

There was no way Kang Yu could miss this chance.

CHAPTER 27

STRONGER THAN EXPECTED (1)

— Oh! Today is the day when the boss is at the gate.

— So, shall we hunt?

— Are you crazy? When you catch him...

Next to the man in uniform, there were a few Players discussing the monster boss.

They were arguing about whether to risk their lives to catch this monster.

‘As expected, starting from the Level C Gate, everything changes.’ Kang Yu nodded, staring at the Players gathered.

The equipment of the high-level players in particular was catching his eye.

You don’t have to be a genius to see such an obvious difference between entry-level and high-level Players.

‘Maybe I should get some equipment, too.’ He’d never met a monster who he would special equipment against in a battle, but you never know in advance what could happen in the uncharted waters of the Gate.

— Hm, let’s see... — If he was going to get equipment, he wouldn’t just get it for himself, but for Han Sol and Dae Su too. Kang Yu looked around again.

— Let’s go!

— Let’s rip his head off this time!

— Let’s get a reward!

One noisy party full of optimistic Players walked towards the Gate.

Kang Yu focused his gaze on the team that was leaving.

‘The inspection must be strict.’ Kang Yu heard more than once that from the C level, the inspection becomes more thorough. Each Player would have a different inspector.

They also used an obscure machine to check the number of mana stones.

‘It’s like they’re checking passports at the bar’s entrance.’ Kang Yu realized why victims for the Andras Guild were being caught at the D-level gate.

Given their reputation and such thorough inspections at the higher level gates, they could have been caught red-handed.

— Well... — Among the crowds, Kang Yu noticed an inspector in the distance who was carefully checking one Player, who, in the end, wasn’t allowed in, probably due to the absence of a party.

‘This is a good chance.’ Kang Yu looked at several Players who surrounded the Gate.

Everyone was focused on the Player who was shouting, promising that he’d catch the boss and get the reward.

‘It is said that the mana stones mined from the B level boss may cost about a million won.’ It is widely believed that the quality of such stones were several times higher, which made them more expensive to sell.

In particular, a troll boss’s mana stone could be worth several million won in an instant.

— Maybe this time we should go.

— Actually, I’m not sure.

All the Players gathered in front of the entrance were looking at each other with a doubtful look.

Of course, killing a troll boss at level C was more difficult than killing a hobgoblin at level E.

This was due to the fact that the difference between levels B and C was many times

greater than between levels C and E.

— Great. — Kang Yu looked at the hesitant Players once again.

Kang Yu gently approached the gallery players and shouted loudly:

— Let's not miss this chance and catch the boss together! How can he run away if we go at him in a crowd?

— That's right! Instead of standing here, let's team up and finish him off! — The guy who originally promised to finish off the monster agreed immediately.

The other Players actively supported them, but there was one important problem:

— In this scenario, the reward is too small.

— Yes!

Of course, the more Players were going to the party, the less money each of them will get.

Even considering the fact that they will get more than a million, it was not comforting – there are too many.

Kang Yu once again shouted at the doubtful crowd:

— But think about the experience points! The boss is powerful, so each of us will get enough points.

When they heard Kang Yu's words, the Players' eyes shone.

Killing the boss gave not only money but also experience points. That's a decent amount of experience points.

It was an accurate point. A suggestion for a rapid improvement could seduce anyone.

'Everybody knows that when you kill monsters at a high level, and even more so when you kill the boss, you get a decent amount of experience points, even if there are many Players in the party.' The same with 'elite' monsters.

When killing the ‘elite’, each Player is given a large amount of experience. Even if divided by all the Players, it was many times more than when killing ordinary monsters.

— Wonderful!

— Now that we have the opportunity, let’s see what this boss is like!

It’s like they say, ‘A spark will start a fire...’

Once the Players agreed, their desire to catch the boss became even greater.

Even the already close-knit parties turned around and looked at them with interest.

‘A little more and the fire of their desire will be fully lit.’ Kang Yu ‘burned the wick,’ got out of the crowd, and started watching.

Of course, he wasn’t thinking of joining the party to catch the boss.

That way, he wouldn’t get much money. He’d get experience points, but the payment received for the mana stones would have to be divided among all.

For him, the monster’s body was an important component, thanks to which he receives not only the mana stone but also additional Magi with the Devourer’s Power.

That’s why he didn’t want to share it with others at all.

‘I have to get it all by myself.’ He didn’t need to share with these Players, they weren’t Dae Su or Han Sol.

The Player who was shouting the most before started collecting the members.

Twenty people came together in all. When they gathered in such a large group and came to the gate, they could be mistaken for a guild.

— Let’s go!

— Let’s kill the boss and get 4th rank!

And so, suddenly a big party was created to catch and kill the boss.

They made sure of each other's capabilities and headed towards the checkers at the gate.

'Now.' Kang Yu waited until the crowd reached the gate and walked towards them.

Each of the inspectors were focused on carefully checking the Players' IDs while the crowd was watching what was happening.

— Get in line, please!

— Wait a bit!

At that moment, while the inspectors were helping to organize the Players', Kang Yu, with the help of Heaven's Power, flew over the fence inconspicuously and ended up at the Gate. He applied the Power of Oblivion to a few soldiers who were not involved in the noisy confrontations and slipped into the Level C Gate.

'Good.' Kang Yu, who had entered the gate, smiled and looked at the landscape around him.

'The area looks like the gate with goblins.' The place he got into was filled with dense forests.

As he made his way through the thickets, he went further and further into the forest.

'Now the question is where to find the boss.' He went up into the sky to look around, but because of the thick thickets, nothing could be seen.

Suddenly, Kang Yu remembered one Power.

'Will I be able to use it now?'

The Power of Observation that once belonged to a demon named Astarot.

Since it was a strong Power, Kang Yu couldn't use it before, but now it was worth trying to use it again.

— Well... — Kang Yu checked how many Magi units were available. Thanks to Dok Hyun's ritual, Kang Yu had just over 50 units available.

‘But it should actually be a lot more than 50.’ Because, with the increase in rank, the power sealing away Man Ma Jung was weakening. That’s why his strength was many times greater than 50.

‘I think this should work.’ Kang Yu nodded and went further into the forest.

When he went far enough, he touched the ground with his hand and used the Power of the Observation.

The power that came out of his hand like a string of ants began to spread on the ground.

From the information coming into his head, he frowned.

This kind of ‘search’ was astonishing, but it had one downside.

‘Too much information.’ The closer the source of information was, the easier it was to understand, and the further it was, the faster that information entered his head and the harder it was to understand.

In Hell, he used this power together with the Power that increases the speed of perception, but here it would be a waste of Magi.

— Ahhh! — His head started to heat up.

He started to choke like he was sinking.

Just as he thought it would be too difficult to keep using the Power, he found the presence of a powerful creature.

‘Found it.’ Kang Yu’s eyes gleamed.

He felt a powerful force different from that of ordinary monsters.

‘There are a lot of them.’ Because it was the boss, it was surrounded by a lot of trolls and orcs.

Like the Hobgoblin, he was always surrounded by small monsters.

‘Hmm.’ Kang Yu squinted and heard noise from Players.

It was the big party created at his instigation.

‘I can use them.’ That’s what Kang Yu thought as he headed towards the troll boss.

‘First, we need to get their attention.’ Then Kang Yu could lurk and watch the battle between the Players and the boss. And then, while they’re fighting as hard as they can, Kang Yu can go in the back and attack.

‘How can I get their attention?’ Kang Yu, after watching the trolls with staves in their hands guard their head, raised one hand up.

[Power of Dark Spear]

The power that belonged to a demon named Roy.

In Kang Yu’s hands, a two-meter long spear made from Magi appeared, which he threw right at the boss.

The spear definitely pierced his heart.

‘Great, now we have to lure him closer to the Players.’ Kang Yu stepped in the boss’ direction.

That’s when the notifications started coming in.

[You successfully destroyed a Level B boss]

[For killing the boss, you get extra experience points]

[You’re in first place for murder from the stealth. Experience points are tripled]

[Level increased by 4 units]

— Huh? — Kang Yu looked at the battlefield in bewilderment.

The boss with the spear stuck in his chest was lying on the ground, wailing with his eyes covered and his limbs twitching.

— Did he... die in one blow?

CHAPTER 28

STRONGER THAN EXPECTED (2)

— What, did he die from a single blow? — Kang Yu, who wasn't trying to kill the boss, frowned and chuckled.

He originally planned to lure the monster to the other Players to defeat the dozens of trolls and orcs guarding the boss.

But his plan collapsed at the moment when the spear made of Magi, created only to attract the attention of the boss, pierced his heart, thus dying.

'Is he really the boss?' Kang Yu, not believing that he really died from one blow, was surprised to see the notifications.

'Maybe I expected too much from a Level B monster.' Kang Yu tilted his head to one side and felt the forces coming from his boss and trolls.

'No.' Still, the boss was stronger than small monsters.

In that case, there's only one conclusion to be drawn:

'I became stronger than I thought.' Kang Yu certainly got stronger after the ritual, but he hadn't thought so after meeting the red-haired girl.

Of course, he started to underestimate himself because he didn't even meet her at a high gate, but at PC Bang.

'Apparently, I still have plenty of power.' He'd gotten to rank 3 and absorbed the Magi through a ritual in the Andras Guild.

But even though Kang Yu had that much power, he wasn't stronger than that girl.

'Who is she?' As he remembered the girl with the red hair he accidentally met, he came out of his hiding place.

After losing their leader, the trolls and orcs rushed towards Kang Yu with a wild roar.

Using Power of Blade, he created his black sword and slowly headed towards the monsters.

— We'll have to change the plan a bit, — he said. He'd killed their boss with a single throw of his spear.

He felt like a tiger against opposing kittens.

Kang Yu decided he could handle the monsters himself even without involving the other Players.

— I'll do it myself.

He wasn't the kind of person to do risky reckless things.

From an outside perspective, many of his actions may seem dishonest, even low, but for the sake of his safety, he was ready to do a lot, even risking the lives of others.

Trolls were rushing in his direction, waving their clubs. Kang Yu put the blade forward and sent Magi towards the monsters.

Once it hit their bodies, the Magi turned into sharp blades.

Using the Power of the Blade to the fullest extent.

He could almost use his skills as he did in Hell without much difficulty.

'Wonderful.' Now he felt light in his movements and was able to use the Powers more freely than when he was hunting lizardmen.

Kang Yu smiled satisfactorily. It's nice to be able to recover lost strength. He felt as if he was throwing heavy loads off his shoulders one by one.

Kang Yu cut the monsters into pieces, and their complaining screams spread all over the district.

Those who had not yet been caught up with the Power of Blade felt Kang Yu's might and as he slit almost half the monsters, the trolls and orcs turned around and ran in

the opposite direction.

‘They weren’t so foolish if they figured out to run away.’ Probably it wasn’t logic, but an instinct for self-preservation.

The monsters who thought they couldn’t defeat Kang Yu were running away with horrified screams.

Kang Yu lazily put his hand forward and pointed it towards the monsters.

‘This is a great chance.’ A great chance to see how far he can go.

Kang Yu concentrated and gathered all the Magi.

There was a cut on his hand and a drop of blood dripped to the ground.

— The land of the Blades.

A blade appeared at the place where the drop of blood had fallen.

Drawing a geometric pattern, the black blades rose out of the ground, directly chasing the monsters.

Trolls and orcs were pierced by the sea of sharp blades and immediately died.

Even though they were monsters, this method of the massacre was too brutal.

The monsters that had barely escaped such a death ran forward without looking back.

[Mass killing of level C trolls successfully completed]

[Mass murder of level D orcs successfully completed]

[Level up by 2]

— Ha! — From Kang Yu’s mouth, who used Blade Earth, there was a rude laugh.

At some point, without noticing it, he covered himself up later.

Even so, he wiped the sweat from his forehead and looked around.

The earth, covered with blades, was covered with the blood of monsters.

The land of the blades.

Kang Yu alone used a power invented and created by a demon called Shabnak.

‘Demons have a good imagination.’ But they always use their Powers in the same way.

Of course, there were several exceptions, but Shabnak was not one of them.

There was a sound of notification.

[Power of land of Blades successfully mastered](Class: A)

[Your skills have become more precise, the next use will be simplified].

In practical terms, both notices meant the same thing.

Kang Yu thought of using power as good training and headed towards the boss’s body.

— It’s time to get my sweet bonus.

Kang Yu smiled and started using the Devourer’s Power.

It quickly enveloped all the monsters in the area.

‘I wonder if it’s because the amount of mana stones was bigger.’

The Devourer’s Power pulled energy out of the bodies faster than before.

Pulling in all the Magi he wanted, his mood improved, and he thought:

‘Mana stones or Magi?’ Because now, thanks to his special ability at rank 3, he could pull out Maryok from mana stones, turning it into a Magi.

Kang Yu wasn’t sure if it was money or Magi that mattered.

‘Magi first’.

[Magi increased by 2 units]

— What? Just two? — Looking at the notice, Kang Yu instantly frowned.

Maybe it's because he already has 50 units and the process is slower now.

By killing the boss and most of the monsters guarding him, he only got two units.

The higher the level, the harder it is to raise it.

— Ah? — Kang Yu suddenly bent his head sideways and looked at the notifications. — 'Those are the same skills.'

The players said that by using special abilities in practice, you can get skills that make it easier to use the ability.

However, since Kang Yu's technique had already been worked out, he didn't notice any changes.

— Hmm... If you think about it that way, special ability is similar to the Powers I have.

— Of course, each one has its own peculiarities, but all the Players' abilities are connected.

Kang Yu snapped his tongue and turned.

He had another reason to go up to a high-level gate.

'But before that, the rate of increase was normal.' Kang Yu has a strong Power, but it couldn't really be measured, so the increase was fast.

When he caught the boss, he'd gone up four levels, and when ordinary monsters were killed, he went up two more levels.

After much doubt, Kang Yu decided to turn the level C mana stones, which were in the top ten monsters and the boss, into Magi.

He didn't need money much anymore, but if he advanced higher to earn money, he could get a lot more.

'Pull out all the Magi.' Kang Yu unconsciously focused on the black smoke.

With wild sounds, the Devourer's Power began pulling Magi out of the brutally

murdered monsters.

There were only four levels left until the 4th rank.

— Perhaps I will hunt a little more before returning. — In any case, he had to wait for the exit of the big party to slip past the military unnoticed.

With the help of his Power, he immediately found the location of the Players who were looking for the troll boss.

— Well, where's the boss, really?!

— Maybe the inspector officers were wrong.

— Damn it!

After a couple of hours wandering in the woods in search of the boss, the Players began to make angry cries.

They even split up and went in different directions to find the monster, but the boss was nowhere to be found.

— There were only trolls running around chaotically.

— No one found the boss's body, did they?

— There are signs of battle, but no dead bodies were found.

There was doubt on their faces.

— Uh, let's go back.

— Yeah... but we could search a little more...

— Let's just leave. All-day long in a vain...

Their desire to catch the boss died out as quickly as it did.

Several Players offered to leave, and eventually the group headed for the exit.

Kang Yu discreetly joined them from behind.

‘If I go out in the crowd, no one will notice me.’ Kang Yu was able to achieve a good result thanks to today’s hunt, but to go out unnoticed, he faked a disgruntled face and followed the Players out.

— There was no boss there!

— We only wandered for a few hours in vain.

The first Players to leave the gate went straight to the officers, complaining quite loudly about the lack of a boss, creating the perfect environment for Kang Yu to leave.

‘Great.’ Kang Yu took advantage of the opportunity to slip out of the gate.

But as he touched the ground and was about to go home, a loud order came out:

— Shut up, everybody! — People dressed in red-and-black uniforms approached the gate.

— From... the Hwaran squad?

— Why are the Hwarans here?

— Is that their commander, Baek Hwa Yeon?

— That’s really him!

At the head of the uniformed group was a girl with long golden hair gathered in a ponytail.

Subjugated to her charisma, everyone’s jaws dropped open.

— Lately, there have been frequent allied murders in the D-level gate, so we will check all Players above 3 ranks. We look forward to your cooperation.

After her words, the squad dispersed all over the field.

Kang Yu was frowning.

‘There’s no way... ’ He pressed his lips together tightly and looked at the Hwarans. —
‘I won’t be caught, right?’

CHAPTER 29

YOU EVEN ADDED RAMEN.

Kang Yu was looking around.

The Hwaran Squad was led by the attention-grabbing Baek Hwa Yeon, who wasn't an ordinary Player.

It was very likely that they noticed Kang Yu jumping over the fence while using his Power.

— We won't do a long inspection, so don't worry. We just want to make sure that there are no wanted people among you.

Baek Hwa Yeon spoke in a composed manner, and the squad understood her orders with one glance.

They nodded politely to her and headed towards the Players.

'I don't think they noticed.' Kang Yu, who had expected to get caught, sighed in relief.

It's good if they didn't notice anything.

'Anyway, they're looking for team killers.' Of course, he immediately thought of the Andras guild, the followers of demons who were sacrificing people. 'Did they do anything else?'

So far, it wasn't clear.

But carrying out their rituals using human sacrifices would have attracted public attention sooner or later.

— Would you show me your ID, please?

Baek Hwa Yeon, helping her subordinates, also joined the ID check.

She walked up to Kang Yu with a light smile, and extended her hand.

‘Girl who looks like a guy.’

Kang Yu gave her his ID and said:

— You must be very dutiful to be helping out yourself.

— Making your subordinates do all the work can’t earn credibility.

— It’s worthy of respect.

Kang Yu started conversation in a relaxed manner.

— Have there been many cases of Teamkilling lately?

— Yes. That’s why we’re conducting this inspection.

— It’s enough to catch monsters, but killing people for money is a terrible thing.

— That’s right. — Kang Yu noticed that his words seemed to make her feel a little less guarded.

‘Except that’s a lie.’ She didn’t react that way because there are so many Team Killers, but because they don’t kill people for profit. ‘They know that they’re not killing for money.’

Probably, they have already gotten very close to the guild of Andras and learned about the Demon followers and the rituals they perform.

— Can’t you tell us who does the teamkilling? In case I run into them by accident, I could help you.

— Unfortunately, the investigation is being kept secret. When the case comes out, we’ll be sure to ask for help.

— Oh, I see.

— You’re looking for justice. There aren’t many people like you right now. I like that.

She smiled a little and looked down at Kang Yu's ID.

— You just went up to the Level C Gate. I know you want to start hunting Level C monsters, but it's safer to hunt more Level D monsters and raise your level a little more. Even with smaller rewards, you can easily get experience points up to level 25.

— Thank you.

— Oh Kang Yu... I wish there were more Players like you.

She returned the ID and patted him lightly on the shoulder.

Kang Yu quietly smiled at her words.

'It will be difficult to cope if there are more people like me.' In terms of morals, he's actually a terrible person rather than a good person.

Kang Yu looked at Baek Hwa Yeon, who had gone to the other Players to check their documents.

'The progress of the investigation is kept secret...' Kang Yu wanted to know if Dok Hyun or someone else was the subject of their investigation.

But in this situation, it was clear from a single glance that she was only an ordinary person unable to use the Force of Fear or any other kind of Power.

'Is it enough that I know about the government's interest in demon followers?' He already had Dok Hyun and his subordinates looking day and night for information about other Demon Teachers.

It was better not to draw attention and continue pretending to be a normal Player.

'It's time...' Kang Yu bypassed the Hwaran squad and headed home.

* * *

It's been a few days since the B level boss was killed.

Kang Yu continued to hunt and increase his level at the level C Gate, while Han Sol fully completed her training and said she was prepared to hunt, so Kang Yu called Dae Su.

Dae Su was quick to follow Kang Yu's orders and head to the coffee shop near Han Sol's house. When he approached their table, he reached out to her with a friendly smile.

— Oh, my God! It's nice to meet you! Are you the support that Kang Yu was talking about?

— Ah, yes. It's nice to meet you.

— Heh, you're very cute. When I saw you from afar, I thought I saw an angel.

— Oh... thank you.

When she saw the two-meter-tall large fellow with a glowing glance, she immediately felt uncomfortable and moved a little closer to Kang Yu.

When Dae Su saw them together, he giggled.

— The atmosphere around you isn't quite ordinary. What's your relationship?

— Ah... it's...

— Stop talking nonsense.

Kang Yu gulped down the cold coffee he had ordered and continued after refreshing himself:

— First of all, it would be good if you took Han Sol to the level D Gate to hunt.

— Of course, it would. Support with a special B-grade ability is something that everyone is missing. Sister-in-law, will you be able to take care of yourself?

— Wha... what's 'sister-in-law'?... — Not expecting such treatment from Dae Su, her cheeks flushed.

Dae Su, when he saw her embarrassed expression, laughed.

— It's all over your face. It doesn't matter, don't be shy. Can you tell me more about your ability?

Coughing a bit, Han Sol started talking:

— My ability is called ‘Shining Happiness’. I can both heal and buff.

— Woah! So you can both heal and buff at the same time?

— Yeah. I even leveled up my skills a little.

— It’s unbelievable...

Dae Su made a sincere cry of admiration.

Knowing how to heal and buff at the same time is not an easy task.

Usually, the buffer would be another Player, but this girl could do both roles.

— If you can buff, I have nothing to say. With your level, sister-in-law, you can get into any guild.

— Heh, thank you. But right now, I don’t feel like joining a guild.

— Neither do I. I want to be a powerful player and create history with Kang Yu! — Dae Su had a good-natured smile while he drank some coffee. — Oh, that’s the taste of Americano. It really does taste like coffee. —

‘Definitely not beer.’ Kang Yu looked at Dae Su’s distorted face and smiled.

— Any idea who to take as a Damager?

The Party can’t just consist of support and a tank, so a few days ago, Kang Yu asked Dae Su to find out about Damagers with good skills.

— Of course, he did! I found two awesome Players!

— Oh, you did?

— Heh, heh, heh. Don’t underestimate me. Both Players are so good, they’re doing great without any guild.

— How did you know about them? — asked Kang Yu cautiously.

The question wasn’t about their skills, but how trustworthy they were.

After all, the demon followers were acting under the guise of low-level players to catch their victims. Kang Yu couldn't be sure how many other guilds were doing that.

Whether Dae Su knew Kang Yu's fears or not, he confidently continued:

— I met them while hunting hobgoblins. They'd recently been promoted to 2 ranks. You can trust them.

— Hmm...

Kang Yu looked at Dae Su with doubt.

'Of course, we can test them.' Dae Su already took on players from the Andras Guild once. 'I think I'll check them out myself.'

Kang Yu was worried about Dae Su and especially Han Sol. He couldn't just leave them alone.

— Can I take a look at those two myself?

— Of course, you can. I can introduce them to you tomorrow before hunting.

— Okay, — Kang Yu nodded and turned towards Han Sol.

— Han Sol, is that okay with you?

— They're your acquaintances. Of course, I'm okay with it. Phew, I'll try to get better as soon as possible to start fighting with you.

— You can take your time. The most important thing is your safety. — Kang Yu and Han Sol seemed to have a spark between them.

— Ah~... — Dae Su noticed that and smiled quite a bit. — Ha! Kang Yu, you two look good together. —

— Ha... — Han Sol blushed a bit and looked down.

Dae Su appeared amused and he continued gently with a smile:

— Really, what's your relationship? Are you dating?

— Oh, no! — Han Sol exclaimed quickly.

Her voice was loud enough that most of the people in the coffee shop turned around to look at her.

Realizing that all the people in the coffee shop were looking at her, she blushed even harder and tilted her head and continued quietly:

— We're not dating... — Han Sol said, holding back from adding 'almost'.

Then she raised her head to look at Kang Yu's reaction.

— What do you mean? — Kang Yu felt like he was in shock and frowned.

The look on his face might have made it look like he was struck by lightning.

He trembled as he turned towards Han Sol.

— We're not dating?

— Huh? — When she heard his words, she looked at him questioningly.

What kind of dating is it? They didn't even discuss anything like this before.

When he saw Han Sol's reaction, he shouted out sadly:

— You make me a delicious kimchi jjigae every day!

— No, that's not even what I was talking about...

— You even add ramen in kimchi jjigae!

(P.P.: In Korea, the phrase 'Come to the ramen' sounds like 'Come to the tea,' which is a suggestion of intimacy between people. Likely due to that logic he brings up the ramen. Though it's different, think of it like this: ((and it seems like he considers it the same as:)) suggesting to go to a hotel after drinking at the bar.)

— Kang Yu, I don't know what you mean. — Han Sol's answer was colder than expected.

Kang Yu made a face as if he had been betrayed by the love of his life.

— Um, that's what I'm asking... — Dae Su was looking at Kang Yu and Han Sol sitting in front of him, clueless as to what was going on. — Are you dating? —

CHAPTER 30

THE GUARDIAN OF HELL'S THOUSANDTH CIRCLE (1)

‘Was it really just me who thought we were dating?’ After leaving the coffee shop, Kang Yu was in a state of slight shock from Han Sol’s reaction to the words that they were a couple.

She made him delicious kimchi jjigae every day and let him stay at their house. Of course he thought they were dating. But all his hopes collapsed.

Kang Yu dejectedly dropped his head.

Gently looking at the guy, Han Sol said:

— About that... Kang Yu...

— Yeah?

— Um... You really thought we were dating?

— It’s a little embarrassing to admit it, but yes.

— I... I see... — The girl’s face was flushed as she walked a few steps behind Kang Yu.

When she paused, she looked into the distance and thought about something.

— Did something happen?

— Ah, no, nothing! — Han Sol, who wasn’t expecting a question, hastily shouted out.

Kang Yu, surprised by her strange behavior, tilted his head sideways.

Han Sol continued to lag behind a little, staring again into the distance.

— Heh-heh-heh. — Kang Yu seemed to be thinking about something, a bright smile on his face.

Han Sol clenched her fists tightly.

When Kang Yu watched her behaving so strangely, he decided to come closer and ask her again if she was okay.

But Han Sol was ahead of him and having gained the courage, quickly approached Kang Yu.

— Kang Yu!

— Huh, yeah?

— It's... recently... — Han Sol started saying something when she stammered.

But it must have been pretty hard to say this 'something.' Her face was growing redder and redder and her voice was getting quieter and quieter.

— Han Sol?

— Um... — She closed her mouth, and her body was shaking a bit.

Fighting her indecision, Han Sol took a deep breath and continued:

— About... addressing.

— Uh... what?

— You can switch to 'you.' Let's start with this.

(*A more casual form of 'you.')

Kang Yu smiled at Han Sol's words.

— That's fine.

— Thank you.

— Then you can call me ‘you,’ too.

— Ah, no! I feel more comfortable! — Han Sol answered quickly and confidently, nodding her head.

— Okay, — Kang Yu replied, shrugging his shoulders.

— Heh heh, it’s nice to watch your mood improve, — said Dae Su, who was watching Kang Yu and Han Sol, and came closer. He continued by patting the guy on the shoulder: — Then we’ll meet tomorrow in the Incheon district. I’ll send you the exact address a little later. —

— Mm-hmm... A level D gate is nearer. Why go so far?

— It’s better to start with that gate. This time, we’ll hunt the Orcs instead of the lizardmen.

— Mm-hmm...

— They are, of course, a little stronger than lizardmen, but there are no swamps and there is no need for silence to catch them.

— That’s a good idea! — Kang Yu didn’t expect Dae Su to make such a suggestion, but he was pleasantly surprised.

‘He really isn’t stupid. He’s thinking sane, acting clearly. He also knows what loyalty is. What else does a subordinate need?’

Kang Yu, with a big smile, looked at Dae Su. Anyway, it was a good decision to have saved him from the clutches of the Andras Guild.

— Okay, I’ll see you tomorrow then.

— Yes. What are you going to do today? How about a drink? — In a calm voice, Dae Su asked, picturing the three of them drinking a pile of soju*.

(T.N.: Soju is Korean alcohol, usually 13 —17 degrees.)

— No, I have plans.

— Plans? What kind of plans?

— Levelling up. — Kang Yu said firmly when he looked at his level.

It's level 29.

There's nothing left until rank 4.

'i shouldn't miss out on the opportunity to level up.' Before trying to learn about Demon followers all by himself, he had to become stronger.

And since there is such an opportunity, the power sealing Man Ma Jung will be weakened as well.

He didn't know what he would have to face: High or Low Players. He had to be prepared.

'Waiting for 4th rank.' He'll probably gain a new ability that he didn't have during Hell's reign. So he couldn't help but be interested in the upcoming promotion.

'They say the higher the rank, the more powerful you get.'

So, in anticipation of a more useful ability, Kang Yu turned to Han Sol and Dae Su:

— I think I'll go now.

— Have a good hunt!

— Yes, I'll see you tonight, Kang Yu.

After saying goodbye to them, Kang Yu went to the Level C Gate.

* * *

— Well... — Successfully passing the gate entrance exam, Kang Yu took a breath.

'Let's get started.' No strategy was required to defeat orcs and trolls.

Kang Yu only needed to choose the right route to catch as many monsters as possible.

— Raising levels are getting harder and harder... — Even when killing monsters at

level C, the level rose slowly.

He would rather grind at the Level B Gate, but it wasn't possible yet.

Not only did it take a certain number of mana stones to be sold, but it also required 30 level C mana stones to get a Level B certificate.

'That's why everyone talks about guilds.' If a Player is a member of a guild, he can freely enter a higher level gate with his comrades, even if his level is not as high.

However, Kang Yu, who only had connections with the Andras Guild, which was under strict supervision of the Hwaran squad, did not have this privilege.

— It's time to make connections. — He hadn't thought about joining a guild, but getting to know the Players who are in the big guilds was a good idea.

'Besides, it's not that difficult.' Kang Yu had some charm.

He couldn't compare himself to other players, but he was sure that no matter where he went, he wouldn't be left without attention. Because he knew very well that for every Player in battle, the most important thing was strength and skills.

Continuing to think about gaining connections, he used the Power of the Observation.

The Magi flew a black haze around, transmitting all the recognizable information to Kang Yu's head.

'Let's start with eight trolls.' Kang Yu learned the position of the troll colony and headed towards them. Using the Power of Acceleration, he quickly slipped past the forest.

The guy did not hesitate to fly into a pile of trolls and began cutting heads off monsters with a black sword created with the Power of Blade.

The trolls, not knowing what was happening, froze for a moment and then started screaming loudly. Realizing they were under attack, they raised their clubs and rushed to Kang Yu from all sides.

However, he did not feel horror at the sight of monsters flying at him three meters high. Whatever it was, he didn't even consider it of any importance.

Compared to the monsters living in Hell, the trolls looked even cute to him.

He ended the fight with no interest, crushing eight monsters in less than a minute.

Perhaps people could even feel sorry for the dead trolls, as their murder was extremely brutal.

In the blink of an eye, Kang Yu immediately found a new target, killing a bunch of trolls in one breath.

‘I’ll deal with the bodies later,’ Kang Yu thought. ‘Right now it’s much more important to get the 4th rank by reaching level 30, rather than using the Devourer’s Power and pulling out Magi.

Leaving the bodies untouched, Kang Yu went to the next target with a frightening attitude.

— Mm-hmm... — That’s when he smelled the blood.

Of course, everything around was covered in the blood of eight brutally murdered monsters, but the smell he caught was different from the smell of troll blood.

‘It’s the smell of human blood.’ And the victim was not just hurt, but most likely mortally wounded, so much so that the smell of his blood interrupted the smell coming from the bodies.

Kang Yu squinted and his eyes went dark.

He changed his route and headed towards the source of the smell.

‘Death on Hunt.’ The probability that Player was wounded during a battle and is now dying was high.

In fact, death while hunting was not uncommon, it happened quite often.

The Power of Silence.

However, we couldn’t rule out the possibility of death at the hands of a teammate or the Demon Followers.

With the Power of Silence, Kang Yu took silent steps to continue walking towards the source of the blood smell.

It didn't take long.

In a small clearing in the middle of the forest, there were five disfigured bodies of Players.

— That's... — Kang Yu looked at the bodies from top to bottom.

The bodies lying on the ground were disfigured to such an extent that it would have been difficult to discern their gender.

— They were killed by a monster. — Kang Yu muttered quietly looking at the Players' wounds.

— Hmm... — He squinted incomprehensibly and looked at the bodies again.

'There's no blood from monsters here.' If there was a battle and the monsters won, there should at least be traces of them.

The five-man group that reached the C-level gate lost to the trolls and orcs without even injuring them?

'It can't be that way.' They didn't even fight with the boss, so such a crushing defeat is unimaginable.

No, even if it was the boss, he wouldn't have been able to destroy the whole party without getting hurt by them.

'How did that happen?' Kang Yu squinted, looking at the remnants of the Players' bodies lying around.

At that moment, there was a scream of fear that penetrated down to the bone.

The guy's eyes widened to an impossible size.

— No...

A giant black beast with red spots stood in front of him.

A monster with a powerful body of about five meters high.

The most important thing was that Kang Yu knew this monster well.

— What's a Hellhound doing here?

The monster standing among the trees was nothing more than a guard from the First Thousandth Circle of Hell.

CHAPTER 31

THE GUARDIAN OF HELL'S THOUSANDTH CIRCLE (2)

Hellhound.

A five-meter high monster that resembles a dog.

A creature that moves at an incredible speed, with skin stronger than steel.

This was the first powerful guard Kang Yu met when he entered Hell's First Thousandth Circle.

'What is Hell's guardian doing here?' Even though the Hellhound dog looked like a Gate monster, there was a huge difference between them.

They both had Magi, but the monsters took more energy from Maryok which were imprisoned in the mana stones.

They were different from the guards.

Being almost demons, these creatures took power exclusively from the Magi.

When Kang Yu noticed, the dog growled loudly, eyes sparkling fiercely.

With every breath of the Hellhound, the tongues of flame flew out of her mouth.

— What's going on, really? What could have happened for the Hellhound to find herself here on Earth?

Even Kang Yu, the ruler of the Nine Thousandth Circle of Hell, went through great agony and suffering to create a temporary rift to get to Earth. A dog couldn't do that for sure.

'Is this a trick of the Devil's Teachers?'

But it was just a guess.

— Bloody hell...

Kang Yu used the Power of Dark Spear to create a two-meter long spear from Magi.

‘I don’t have any good memories of that fiery bastard.’ When Kang Yu was in the First Thousandth Circle of Hell, those dogs were hunting him like food.

As soon as you look at a Hellhound, you are almost guaranteed to die. In fact, even Kang Yu was on the verge of being killed by a Hellhound several times.

— Well, it’s different now.

He may have been at the bottom of the food chain before, but now things have changed.

Now creatures like that monster have become Kang Yu’s food.

Most of Kang Yu’s strength may have been sealed, but not enough to lose to some dog.

The hound gave a low growl and spat out black flames at Kang Yu.

Of course, this fire was very different from the Hellfire created by the leader of the Andras Guild.

And, of course, the flames that comes from this fire can instantly burn anything or anyone.

Successfully escaping a fiery attack, Kang Yu threw his spear at the Hellhound.

The spear pierced the dog’s thick skin like an arrow.

The troll boss had died from only one hit, but not only was the Hellhound not even injured, she became even angrier.

The hound leaped off the ground with her paws and jumped towards Kang Yu.

The ground at the point where the dog had jumped from was blown apart as if by a bomb. The creature raced toward Kang Yu at breakneck speed.

Kang Yu looked at the healthy canines of the dog that could snack a man in an instant.

He cleverly pushed off the ground and kicked at the dog's huge teeth.

The teeth were shattered by a blow filled with Magi, and she was thrown to the side where she had stood before.

When Kang Yu flipped in the air, he landed on the ground, creating a hole with his right hand.

The Power of Ground Shaking.

The Magi, coming from his hand, spread all over the earth.

As if from an earthquake, the soil between Kang Yu and the dog fell apart.

The dog resembling a Hellhound fell into the pit and roared like a normal dog, only several times louder.

The power of the Dark Spear.

As the Hellhound jumped out of the failed pit, Kang Yu created another spear.

Strongly gripping the handle of the spear, he swung and put it into the head of a staggering dog, and the dog roared again.

— What a resilient dog she is!

Even with her head pierced by a spear, the Hellhound could jump and get out of the pit. Staggering, she tried to attack Kang Yu again.

The dog wasn't even going to try to run.

The Hellhound is an eater at the top of the food chain of the First Thousandth Circle of Hell.

She won't be able to escape from the battlefield with her pride.

The hound roared up and flinched.

The muscles on her hind legs tightened, and her body showed tendons. The dog began to emit even more Magi.

The lights of flame that she was ejecting now enveloped her whole body.

The flame, with the characteristic sound of a bomb explosion, headed towards Kang Yu.

The fire hit a tree next to Kang Yu and when it exploded, it crumbled to the ground.

— This dog still won't give up, — said the guy with a sneer, looking at the hound from hell, who, even though fatally wounded, continued to move, killing herself.

Kang Yu clenched his fist and then swung it back as if he was pulling a bowstring.

The Power of the Heavenly Majesty.

He felt the energy pouring into his body.

There was no one better than the demon Bafomet in increasing strength.

Putting his left foot forward, he swung with ease and gave with all his strength under the breath of a hellish hound.

The giant dog, who weighed a lot more than Kang Yu, howled.

Her chin was skewed and black blood was pouring out of her mouth and her whole body was shaken. This time, the hound lost consciousness.

— Phew. As expected of the Power of Heaven, it requires a great deal of Magi. — He had only used the Power literally for a moment, but it used half his Magi.

Kang Yu exhaled with noise and walked up to the dead body.

He remembered the moment when he got to the First Thousandth Circle of Hell, he had to put a lot of effort into killing the guard dog.

'When it comes to the effort, the dogs were just as difficult to deal with as the Supreme Demons.' When Kang Yu passed through the Two Thousandth and Three Thousandth Circle of Hell, the guards were getting stronger and stronger, and Kang Yu had not yet fully understood how to control the Devourer's Power.

That's why the Hellhounds were a real terror to him.

Then, a notification window appeared:

[You've successfully killed a splinter from the rift].

'A splinter from the rift?' The message that came up before his eyes was different in content from the usual notifications. 'I think when I came to Earth, I heard something about the core of the rift, but a splinter... '

It's very likely that creatures coming from a rift were called 'splinters.'

'But how did it get here?' The questions were only growing.

But Kang Yu couldn't find the answers to them yet.

In the end, he wasn't able to verify his assumptions, but he needed to find the answers.

His thoughts were interrupted by new notifications:

[Experience Points received]

[Level up by 5 units]

'Five units...' When Kang Yu saw a notice like that, his eyes expanded.

That number wasn't even compared to killing the troll boss.

Kang Yu was also afraid that after receiving the 4th rank and 30th level, it would be difficult to raise it. Then, he suddenly got 5 units of experience.

'I went up to level 34 in one go.' He's exceeded today's plan by as much as 4 units.

His eyes shone in anticipation of the next announcement.

[When you get to level 30, you get rank 4].

[You have a special ability of Rank 4]

'Oh yes.' Kang Yu's current target was rank 4.

By killing the Hellhound alone, he gained so much experience that it was hard to imagine how much he would have gained if he had only continued his troll hunt.

Before testing his new special ability, Kang Yu decided to test his strength.

He used the Heavenly Power and emptied more than half of his reserves, but now he felt a rush of energy.

The Sealing power continues to weaken, and he once again became convinced that sooner or later he would be able to release all his power.

When he felt the Magi doubled, he smiled satisfied.

‘Now I can use two Powers at once without problems.’ He was more than satisfied with the result.

The Magi he just received flowed in his body.

Kang Yu felt a strange feeling.

‘What is that?’ He tilted his head sideways and felt for his Magi again.

It spilled out of Man Ma Jung many times faster than usual and spread all over his body.

‘Magi moves around his body much faster.’ He knew that he could use the Powers more naturally than before.

— It’s possible... — Kang Yu opened the status window to test the new ability.

[Special Ability Rank 4: Lord of Magi (Class: A)]

[Application: Faster and more natural possession of the Magi. You are able to hide your own Magi from other Players.]

It’s because of the ability, as expected. It was the merit of a new ability to help manage the Magi.

‘A Class A ability!’ Kang Yu’s eyes shone.

The ability he received this time was different from the previous ones.

If his previous ability helped in obtaining Magi from the outside, then this ability increased the powers that were already there.

This is a real victory.

Now he can hide the Powers he has in battle with monsters.

It was an ability he did not have, even as Lord of the Nine Thousandth Circle of Hell.

‘If it goes on like this, I will soon get all my Man Ma Jung and become much stronger than I was in Hell.’

Even if he was caught by the Great Demons, he would be able to get rid of them without any problems.

— She has no mana stones, — Kang Yu said. The guy clicked his tongue.

Since the Hellhound Guardian had used up all her energy from the Magi, she had no mana stones for him to collect.

‘I guess I’ll leave now.’ Kang Yu left the gate, satisfied that he got more from the hunt today than he had intended to.

When he left the gate, he walked towards the house with a light gait.

— It’s been a long time! — At that moment, someone turned to him.

Kang Yu turned his head towards the source of his voice.

In front of him, the red-haired girl he had already met at PC Bang was standing against the wall.

CHAPTER 32

THE PROPOSAL BY CHAE YOUNG JU

— I don't know, we don't exactly have the right relationship to communicate like this,
— Kang Yu replied calmly to the girl who suddenly showed up.

In fact, they could hardly even be called acquaintances.

Kang Yu looked quietly into the eyes of the girl with short red hair.

— Do you have something to say?

— Chae Young-ju. — The girl sauntered slowly towards Kang Yu. — My name is Chae Young-ju. —

— Chae Young-ju? — Kang Yu felt he had heard that name somewhere before.

After racking his brain to go through all the people he knew, he finally remembered.

'I think that's who they were talking about in the waiting room at the Player Control Department...' The Player who received a special S-level ability from the very first rank. 'I think they said that she was the head of one of the five guilds.'

One in five.

One of the five largest guilds that exist in Korea today to date.

Hanul. Red Rose. Onnuri. Mir. Sanalae.

She was one of the five guild commanders.

— You're from Red Rose?

— That's right. I'm the leader of the Red Rose Guild.

Kang Yu didn't say anything. She was the head of one of those five guilds.

The guild that's at the top of Korea's most powerful guilds.

The girl he accidentally ran into at PC Bang turned out to be a very famous person.

'Then it's no wonder why she's so strong.' She was the only person whose power had been strong enough for Kang Yu to question it, and probably the only person capable of beating him.

The special ability level of the girl he encountered at PC Bang was several times higher than Kang Yu. Behind her pretty face was a fearsome Player.

'I wonder if this is how it feels when you find out a fat, absurd neighbor is actually the director of a large representative company.' Of course, he wouldn't know for sure, but it seemed like a fair comparison to him.

He warily observed Chae Young-ju.

She looked different today compared to the day they first met: she wore comfortable short shorts and a tight T-shirt.

She was still dressed quite simply today, but given her appearance, she made a much bigger impression.

'She's dressed up.' You can't tell from the clothes alone, but looking at the light makeup that wasn't there last time, Kang Yu was certain.

He had no doubt that the girl wasn't here to fight him.

'If you're going to fight with someone, there's no need for makeup.'

When Kang Yu finished looking at Young-ju, he asked indifferently:

— What does the head of Red Rose Guild want from me?

— Actually, I found out some information about you. — She took out a piece of paper as she said that. — Oh Kang Yu. 29 years old. Spent his entire childhood in the Jeongson orphanage, and since he wasn't adopted, he's living an independent life now. Isn't that right?

— I don't know why you would do that, but that's right.

— He was registered as a Player on May 23rd. Which is... about two weeks ago.

Kang Yu, biting his lip, waited for her to continue.

— According to the Player Control Department's test results, your first special ability is class F. That's a mistake, of course. If it were really a Class F ability, you wouldn't have made it to the Level C Gate in two weeks.

— Hmm, — Kang Yu nodded slightly.

— Actually, at first, I thought that the identification and Oh Kang Yu's name was fake.
— Young-ju continued impartially. — But both your face and your fingerprints match the data from when you were a child. —

— Where did you get my fingerprints from?

— Weren't your fingerprints taken when you made the ID?

— I didn't think the big guilds had that many connections.

Government protected information flows too easily into other people's hands.

— Well, as you know, money solves everything. — Young-ju shrugged her shoulders.
— So the first thing I did was to make sure that you were who you said you were. And when it was confirmed... —

After carefully looking Kang Yu in the eyes, she continued:

— I realized that you're a player with outstanding abilities. Perhaps you're even stronger than Baek Gang Hyun.

— Thank you for such high praise, — Kang Yu said with a smile. — So what did you end up figuring out? —

Kang Yu wanted to know just how much she found out about him.

'She hasn't said anything else so far.' And he also wanted to hear from her why she came to see him in person.

There was no need to guess, of course. Kang Yu was very well aware of his value.

He had both power and skills that were greatly advantageous in the situation that Earth was now in.

And he had no desire to hide it nor use it for anything but his own purposes.

‘How fortunate, I was just about to make connections with members of the big guilds.’ He was not going to join any guild, but it was necessary to make allies.

— As head of the Red Rose Guild, I’m letting you know that we want to sponsor you.

— What...? — Wrapping his arms around himself, Kang Yu looked at the girl with a mock childish look. — So you aimed at my body? —

The girl took a deep breath and stared at Kang Yu like she was looking at trash.

‘Hey! You shouldn’t look at people like that!’ He was only joking, but he received a look full of contempt in return.

Kang Yu shrugged his shoulders and continued:

— An unexpected offer.

— What did you think I was going to propose?

— To join your guild, of course.

— Um... — She exhaled the air with noise. — We can hardly accept a Player hiding behind a Class F special ability. If you were going to join a guild, you wouldn’t be hiding your powers from the start.

— Mm-hmm... — It was clear from his face that he was thinking.

‘But I didn’t deliberately hide my powers.’ It was only because he couldn’t fully use Magi during the test, or rather, the stone couldn’t measure his power.

Well, if she keeps thinking like that, it’d be easier for Kang Yu.

He wasn’t planning to join the guild, so there was no need to prove himself to her.

— So what’s the sponsorship?

— Simply put, our guild is going to help you get to level up faster.

— What's the price of this offer? Will you ask me to help you out with that game at PC Bang?

— Oh, you bit... - — She took a deep breath and tried to calm down.

— Ha-ha, just kidding. I really didn't know how to play, since it was the first time I did it.

— Ha, you know, you're the reason I couldn't go up to silver.

— What? So now we're talking about your rank in the game? Um, isn't your rank the lowest...

— No... No! My skills are better, I'm just unlucky getting teammates!

Kang Yu laughed a little when he saw her calm tone change to a high-pitched squeak.

One of the strongest people in Korea, the head of the guild, didn't match the image of someone who cared so much about games.

— Well, let's finish with the jokes. Why do you want to sponsor me?

— To make you stronger.

— You found out about me and as you may have noticed, I'm a rookie who became a Player no more than two weeks ago.

— And in those two weeks, you've managed, hunting alone, to climb to the Level C Gate. A real monster. And I know you're gonna be a lot stronger, a lot stronger.

Kang Yu remained silent, interested in what else she had to say.

'It's not for nothing that she's the head of her guild.' She was able to accurately assess the value of other Players and herself.

What she didn't know was that Kang Yu had returned to Earth from Hell from ten thousand years in the future, or that he had hidden powers that were becoming more and more powerful.

Despite that, she saw Kang Yu's potential and was confident in his powers.

— How will you support me?

— First, you will gain the right to enter all the gates up to Level A Gate. Also, if you decide to gather a party, we will provide the members. You'll be able to choose from our guild who you want. You can also sell mana stones through us and avoid taxes.

— Hmm...

— We'll also supply you with equipment. Of course, for a first-class outfit you will still have to pay a deposit, but if you need something easier, no problem. If you need, we can even pick up a house and a car for you.

'Well, that's not bad.' An outsider might even think he's joined their guild.

No, even joining a guild, Players don't usually get these kinds of privileges.

— What for?

— It's an investment for the future.

— And yet, it's too much.

Kang Yu wouldn't join the Red Rose Guild, he was just taking advantage of what's available to him.

'Besides, it wasn't just anyone who came to me, it was the head of the guild himself. She must be embarrassed by doing so.' It wasn't just a matter of the girl's pride, but of the entire guild.

'Apparently, this is her request.' No matter how talented he was, the conditions offered him were too good.

Of course, if they had known Kang Yu's true strength, the head herself would have fallen to her knees and begged him for a friendly relationship. But not this time.

— A little later... I'll have a request later, and if you're ready by then, I'd appreciate it.

— Um... — Her vague answer took him by surprise. — What kind of request?

When she heard Kang Yu's question, the girl tried to smile when she was sad.

The girl who was just excitedly talking about the video game grew quiet, and her face froze in a sad smile.

When Kang Yu saw this change, he bit his lip.

He felt it was the first time he had seen her real face.

When she wiped the sadness off her face, she answered with a low voice:

— I can't tell you that now.

— Hmm, — Kang Yu nodded quietly.

So far, he hasn't even accepted her offer. If it was a really important request, it was clear why Young-ju couldn't tell him yet.

'If the request doesn't make sense, I'll just refuse.' He decided that if he would accept the guild's support, he wasn't going to sign a contract.

Later, when he learns the request, he will try to fulfill it if he can, and if he can't, he will refuse and sever all ties with the guild.

Kang Yu's doubts were short-lived.

It was a great chance for Kang Yu not only to gain various benefits and support but also to become allies with the large guild.

Kang Yu certainly wasn't stupid enough to miss out on such a beneficial offer.

— I agree.

CHAPTER 33

I TOLD YOU, I'M STRONGER THAN YOU THINK (1)

— I agree.

When Chae Young-Ju heard Kang Yu's answer, her face lit up and she exhaled loudly as if saying, 'I told you so.'

— That's a good decision.

— When will you tell me what the request is? — Kang Yu asked with an arrogant tone, his lips curled to a smirk.

— When the time comes. You don't have the strength for that right now.

— Hm. — The guy exhaled silently and looked at Young-ju.

'What is she going to ask for?'

Actually, it was true that there were many things he couldn't do right now.

But she didn't even know it. She had no idea who she was actually talking to.

Chae Young-ju only knew that he was a gifted player who received his ID two weeks ago.

— You're mistaken.

— What?

— I'm stronger than you think.

Young-ju just smiled without saying a word.

Of course, for her, who was known as one of the best Players in the country, to hear something like that from a Player who started his journey two weeks ago is funny.

— Ha, yeah, yeah. Got it. But I can't tell you about the request yet, not just because you're inexperienced.

— And because of what?

— I don't have enough proof yet. It's not something you can talk about without precise grounds and evidence.

Kang Yu had a hard time understanding what she was talking about.

He looked at the evasive girl one more time and shrugged his shoulders.

'There's no need to find out right now.' She probably had a reason to say this.

Besides, if he didn't want to accept the request, he would just refuse later anyway. And until then, there's no need to worry about it.

— Here's my number, write it down.

— Always a pleasure to have a beautiful girl's number.

— Aren't you a little late to start flattering me? — Young-ju jokingly replied to him while laughing.

She thought Kang Yu was joking with her.

'But I'm serious.' Kang Yu grinned and wrote down the girl's phone number.

She was no match for Han Sol, but it was still nice to get a pretty girl's number.

Kang Yu really wasn't just flattering her.

Compared to Lilith, who tried to get him into her bed every night, all the girls on Earth seemed to be angelic.

— When will I be able to get equipment? — What Kang Yu was most interested in was free equipment.

‘I wonder how much items and equipment will help in a battle.’ He thought that with 666 Powers, the equipment shouldn’t help much in a battle.

As long as he had a sufficient amount of Magi, even without the use of equipment he could powerfully attack the enemy and successfully avoid attacks to defend himself.

So wearing Player equipment hadn’t seemed necessary to him thus far.

‘But if it helps save Magi, why not try?’ If the equipment could help him in battle, that would mean he’d have more Magi left to fight.

Since he doesn’t have an unlimited amount of Magi like he did in Hell at the moment, conserving his Magi was a great idea.

‘Using Power eats too much Magi.’

After reaching 30 levels and 3 ranks, Kang Yu’s Magi had grown even larger, but not so much that it can be wasted on a whim.

— If you want, we can go right now.

— That’s great.

— In that case, follow me. We’ll go to our office.

— Where is it?

— At Seoul Station.

The same station where the Player Control Office was.

Kang Yu nodded and followed the girl.

As he did, he noticed a fancy car parked nearby.

— Look at that!

— Isn’t that a Porsche 918 Spyder?

— It’s crazy...

People passing by were turning their heads to look at the expensive imported car.

Chae Young-ju, who swiftly walked through the crowd, took out the keys and deactivated the car's alarm system.

— Get in.

— Woah! — Kang Yu's admiration sounded as soon as the girl opened the door.

'Is this really the same girl in the sportswear and the cap from PC Bang?' — She looked so cool now that the guy was really wondering if it was the same person in front of him.

'The car creates a totally different image.'

Even just getting behind the wheel, she looked completely different.

Kang Yu wasn't interested in foreign cars before, since he couldn't even afford domestic ones. So now, watching one of the strongest players sit behind the wheel of a luxury car, he experienced a real shock.

— What are you doing? Hurry up and sit down, — said the girl, putting her hands on the steering wheel while looking at Kang Yu., who was just standing there ridiculously.

He nodded a little and sat down in the front seat.

'I'm done...' He thought about how not to melt away in such a chic chair.

— How much is it worth?

— I'm not sure. When I bought it, I didn't look at the price. Probably about a billion won.

The amount was so high that Kang Yu involuntarily opened his mouth.

It was even more expensive than a decent apartment.

Chae Young-ju pressed down on the gas pedal.

The Porsche rolled along the road like sliding on smooth ice.

— As expected of an expensive car. It doesn't just go, it floats.

— Should I find one for you too? — Young-ju was so casual asking this, as if she was going to order a cup of coffee from the coffee shop.

Of course, Kang Yu's eyes were shining.

— Really?

— It's part of our agreement.

— Noona...

(P.P.: Noona — a guy's address to a girl older than him. Closer, friendlier and cuter.)

— What?

— I'll call you Young-ju-noona.

When she heard that statement, the girl's face turned to one of disgust, and her expression looked as if she'd chewed and swallowed a bug by mistake.

That was the second time in the last half an hour that he'd made her look so disgusted.

— I would just appreciate it if you buy a car like that. — Kang Yu wasn't obligated to receive such a fancy car, but he didn't see any reason to give up the gift.

— But if you refuse my request, I'll take it back right away.

— So you're actually a stingy person.

— There are too many hungry mouths in my entourage.

Kang Yu grinned at her evasive answer.

— This is our office.

— It's huge...

She stopped the car in front of the building with over 20 stories.

It looked brand new, decorated with an elegant rose.

‘So this is the power of a large guild.’ A large guild was on the same level as a large corporation.

Kang Yu thought it was a good idea to make connections with people like that, so he followed Young-ju inside the building.

As soon as they went inside, a guy with glasses and a black cape came up to them.

Directing his gaze from Young-ju to Kang Yu, he said:

— Our guild leader has told us about you. It’s nice to meet you. I’m Park Hyun Woo, the head of Red Rose’s Human Resources department. And this is Moon Yeon Ho, the task force chief.

— Oh Kang Yu.

Unlike the respectful Park Hyun Woo, Moon Yeon Ho looked closely at Kang Yu from head to toe.

— I suppose your conversation with the head was a success, since you’re here.

— With those conditions, who would dare to refuse? Especially considering you guys are the Red Rose... refusing would be the same as swallowing poison to die.

— Ha-ha-ha, we aren’t that vicious. — Hyun Woo smiled a little and turned to Yeon Ho.

— Can we go straight to the warehouse with equipment?

— I’ll take him myself, Hyun Woo. You’ve got a lot to do.

— Thank you.

— Then I’ll go with you, — said Moon Yeon Ho, still looking analytically at Kang Yu.

— What for?

— I want to get to know this person better, to see his abilities.

— Hmm... Well, okay. It’s better to get to know this person now that we’ll have to work together. Come on, let’s go.

She headed towards the elevator, waving her hand to gesture for the guys to follow her.

The elevator with Young-ju, Kang Yu and Yeon Ho stopped at the 15th floor.

— This is our inventory warehouse.

Each of the items were stored in a separate, crystal clear case.

— Ho-ho!

— You can choose something from here. If you decide to take high-class uniforms, you'll have to pay a deposit. — She pointed out to the side where ten sets were lying.

It was clear with a glance that the quality of high-class uniforms was much better than normal ones.

Kang Yu looked around.

— What's the cost for a high-class outfit?

— 50 million won per piece. It's quite cheap.

Kang Yu didn't say anything. He's heard, of course, that the outfits are expensive, but to this extent...

'I don't even have that kind of money now.' Because he mainly turns the mana stones he earns into Magi, he hadn't exchanged enough for that much money. 'Even if I sold all the mana stones I'd gotten, I doubt I'd have enough.'

It's too expensive.

'Too bad.' Because just looking at the equipment was enough to tell the difference.

Kang Yu turned away from the higher-class uniforms:

— Then I'd like to see these...

At that moment, a deafening sound flew through the warehouse.

Kang Yu turned his head to the sound source.

Moon Yeon Ho was standing there, drilling Kang Yu with a disgruntled look.

— Speak politely!

— Huh?

— Speak politely to the head of the guild! — Yeon Ho spoke with anger.

Kang Yu looked at him and smiled.

— What if I don't want to?

CHAPTER 34

I TOLD YOU, I'M STRONGER THAN YOU THINK

(2)

— And if I don't? — Kang Yu said it in a mocking tone.

In the heated atmosphere, Moon Yeon Ho suddenly reached for the knife hanging from his waist.

— Yeon Ho! — Chae Young-ju shouted out when she saw him reaching for the knife.

The girl didn't look pleased.

— What the hell are you doing? — He didn't answer her. — Answer me!

— How dare that newbie talk to the head of the guild like that?

— So what? If I don't care, then you shouldn't either.

He didn't say anything.

— If he's being impolite or swears, that's my problem. Don't interfere if you're not asked to, Moon Yeon Ho.

— I got it. — Yeon Ho shuddered and he nodded slowly with resentment.

Chae Young-ju took a deep breath and looked at Kang Yu.

— Kang Yu, don't snap at me too. If you were at the party, the whole group would have been offended by your skirmish.

— I'll keep that in mind. — Kang Yu nodded and turned towards Yeon Ho, who was trembling with anger.

'Is this normal for him?'

Actually, if Kang Yu put himself in Yeon Ho's position, as a member of the guild and someone was being impolite to the head, he would have been hurt too.

Chae Young-Ju, who was the head of the guild, personally went and recruited a Player herself, and that itself was already enough to upset him. Not only that, she and that Player were talking with the informal 'you' as if they're old friends.

'It's hard to make a reasonable judgment in a situation like this.'

On the contrary, it's stranger that Park Hyun Woo, who they met on the ground floor, wasn't angry.

'But their guild looks pretty reliable.' It was obvious, with how faithful the underlings were to their guild and their head.

Seeing Moon Yeon Ho act like this, Kang Yu was able to see that this guild's members were loyal to what they were doing and to who they were working with.

— Well, let's continue. — Kang Yu shifted his gaze from Moon Yeon Ho's clenched fists to the equipment.

[Information]

Name: Shadow Armor

Type: Epic

Effect: Resistance to Physical Damage +40, Resistance to Magic Damage -10, Movement Speed +10, Physical Strength -2.

Feature: Instant speed up to 50%, can be used once a day.

— Mm-hmm...

Unambiguous characteristics.

Enhancing physical resistance is not bad, but the rest...

He was particularly not pleased with the reduction in physical strength.

‘And the feature is useless for me.’ Kang Yu already had a huge amount of strength, so an instant speed boost wouldn’t be something new to him.

‘It’s better to pick something with no special abilities, but with a good effect.’

Looking at the equipment in the warehouse, Kang Yu turned to Young-ju:

— Isn’t there anything here that increases physical strength?

— Not the normal ones. But there are some among the high-end equipment.

— Do they have good effects? — Kang Yu asked, tilting his head sideways.

‘How much will it cost...?’

Considering the lowest equipment was as ‘cheap’ as 50 million won, Kang Yu couldn’t even imagine how much it would cost to have equipment that increases strength.

— Of course they would. You know that the higher your level, the better the equipment must be to best assist your skills. Only high-end equipment is good enough to achieve that.

— Oh, I see. — Kang Yu nodded in understanding.

Now that he has 50 units of Magi, it was much harder for him to raise his level than at the beginning.

Of course, he surpasses Players with the same level of Magi in terms of strength, but that didn’t change the essence of the problem. The equipment would hardly increase his physical strength considering the actual level of his abilities was already so high.

So he wasn’t going to be able to increase his physical strength any faster with equipment.

Kang Yu looked around again and asked:

— Then, how about equipping with no special abilities but with a good effect?

— Wait a second, I do think we have something like that.

He and Young-ju went through the warehouse and she pointed out a few options.

— We'll permit you to borrow three sets from us, so choose carefully.

— Okay.

Kang Yu analyzed the items she suggested: handcuffs, a pendant and a black coat.

They all gave no special abilities, but had good effects.

[Information]

Name: Black Handcuffs

Type: Epic

Effect: Resistance to physical damage +50, Resistance to magic damage +30.

[Information]

Product Name: Storage Suspension Maryok

Type: Epic

Effect: Resistance to magic damage +60

[Information]

Product Name: Ogre Coat

Type: Epic

Effect: Resistance to physical damage +80

Kang Yu tried putting on all the equipment that he looked at.

'You can't tell the difference right away.'

Resistance to physical damage was supposedly +130 and magic damage was +90, but to be honest, the guy couldn't feel a difference even after wearing the equipment.

'Probably because I don't know what my original numbers are.' Since the total wasn't

displayed anywhere, it was hard to check what had actually changed.

— If the physical damage resistance is 130, how much does it actually affect things?

— Ah, it's hard to understand at first. — She nodded in understanding because she had gone through the same confusion before. — 130 resistance damage is about 5 millimeters of steel over the skin. —

— Oh. — Kang Yu nodded his head with great interest. — Does the equipment only work in the area of the body where it's equipped? —

He assumed that the equipment was limited and that it would only work where it's equipped.

Just like with a bulletproof vest: the chest is protected but the head is not.

— No, thanks to the imprisoned Maryok, the power spreads all over the body. However, in areas further from the equipment, the defense does work at half the strength.

— Then, if I have 1,000 units of physical defense and I get shot, say, in the eye, the bullet will just fly away?

— I haven't experienced that, but in theory, yes.

— So that's what equipment is for. — Players with powerful equipment couldn't be easily destroyed even if you launch a rocket at them.

'I underestimated the practicality of equipment.' Listening to Young-ju's explanation, he looked at his own body with amazement in his eyes.

With this equipment, Kang Yu could save many times more Magi than he originally thought.

'I think I want to get high-quality equipment.' Kang Yu looked at her with hopeful eyes.

If epic outfits are like this, then what would happen if Kang Yu possessed high-class items?

— Young-ju noona...

— What is it?

— Remember the other day we were talking about a new car? Can I have one high-end item instead?

She didn't say anything.

— If you trust me to borrow it, I'll pay its worth back to you one and a half times, — Kang Yu said as if he were in a gambling house.

Chae Young-ju took a deep breath as if she had a headache and said:

— It's going to be difficult now, but we'll decide at the meeting...

The dark noises started to sound again from beside them.

Kang Yu and Chae Young-ju turned their heads towards the source.

There was a pale and shaky Moon Yeon Ho standing there.

— N-noona, you said?

— Yeon Ho...?

— You... how dare you?!

He was overwhelmed with anger, and he pulled out a knife without a hesitation and threw himself at Kang Yu.

— Moon Yeon Ho, what did I just say? — Chae Young-ju growled, grabbing the point of his knife with her bare hands.

She got angry again, and the flow of Maryok coming from her was so strong it took his breath away.

— Take your knife and get out of here. If this happens one more time you will face punishment.

— I'm sorry.

Moon Yeon Ho, with an impenetrable expression on his face, removed the knife and pressed his lips firmly to make it clear that what was happening was gravely upsetting.

— Hah... I'm sorry. That wasn't planned. We'll punish him.

— No, that's okay.

— Anyway, what kind of equipment do you want? We'll discuss it at the meeting.

— Mm-hmm... it'd be great to have armor that's easy to move with. If I may, with good specifications.

— Armor, huh... — Chae Young-ju thought about it for a moment.

Moon Yeon Ho, who was listening to their conversation, directed a look at Kang Yu.

— You said you need armor?

— Yes, I do.

— If you really need it, I have a proposal. Let's fight and if you win, I'll give you mine. I have exactly what you're looking for.

— Moon Yeon Ho, I think I've told you to get out.

Chae Young-ju loomed in front of Moon Yeon Ho, who had disobeyed her orders and even initiated conversation with Kang Yu.

This time, she was even angrier, and the anger manifested itself in Maryok wrapped around her.

— No, wait.

— What?

— His proposal sounds tempting.

Young-ju didn't know what to say.

Kang Yu looked at the armor that Moon Yeon Ho was wearing with great interest.

He'd grant Yeon Ho the fight he wanted, as long as he could get that equipment.

— Are you out of your mind...? — Young-ju looked at Kang Yu with a fierce look.

She knew that he had outstanding abilities.

Neither she nor Baek Kang Hyun could get to the Level C Gate in just two weeks.

Not only did Kang Yu accomplish that, but he'd been hunting alone at the Level C Gate.

And that's not because he has a special ability in Level S, but because he's naturally talented. The last time she ran into him at PC Bang, she had made sure of that.

'This man is as strong as me. No, even stronger.' She was convinced he was strong enough to rewrite Korean history.

That's why she decided to ally with him.

'But this is different.' It wasn't a question of having or not having abilities.

Moon Yeon Ho is strong.

He was at Level 67 with 6th rank. A little more and he'll move up to rank 7.

A hunting dog can't defeat a powerful tiger. A player who's only two weeks old could never defeat Moon Yeon Ho.

'Crazy idea.'

Kang Yu had to be stopped.

He's the one who's going to be the most powerful player in the near future.

If they screwed up their relationship now, the sponsorship wouldn't do any good.

— Don't talk nonsense and go away. Kang Yu, you too...

— It's a deal. — Kang Yu interrupted Chae Young-Ju's words.

When she saw Kang Yu's bloodthirsty smile, she shuddered without understanding

why.

‘It’ll be fun.’ Kang Yu looked at the equipment again and licked his lips as if he had seen a delicious dessert.

‘You have to take any opportunity you’re given.’

CHAPTER 35

I TOLD YOU, I'M STRONGER THAN YOU THINK

(3)

— It's a deal. —

Moon Yeon Ho smiled triumphantly when he heard Kang Yu approve his idea.

Convinced that Kang Yu was no match for him, he relaxed his shoulders with a confident look.

'I'll make you respect our leader.' He touched his left eye.

His old scar was 'burning.'

As a low-level Player, he had been attacked by his own teammates.

And the person who saved him at that moment was Chae Young-ju.

So for him, she was not only the head of the guild but also the person who gave him a new life. She was the person to whom he swore eternal loyalty.

He had given his heart and soul to her.

That's why Kang Yu's behavior was annoying.

He looked at the newcomer with a look that could burn him alive.

Moon Yeon Ho, who heard Kang Yu calling the commander Noona, felt outraged and nauseous.

He felt as if a stranger had just spat on his tender feelings that he'd treasured over the years.

— I... — He turned his gaze on the girl.

Chae Young-ju, not expecting such a situation, stared back at Yeon Ho in dismay and indignation at the same time.

Even in her anger, she looked like an angel.

It made him even angrier — Kang Yu was acting too familiar with that untouchable beauty.

‘I’ll make you realize the difference in our strength.’ Even if the new recruit was talented, Yeon Ho refused to just let him intrude on his territory like this.

If Moon Yeon Ho just lets him go now, he wouldn’t be able to resist stabbing the insensitive guy later.

That’s why they were on their way to the gym on the fifth floor now.

Kang Yu didn’t care where they were going, he was just following Moon Yeon Ho.

Yeon Ho felt another wave of anger overcome him, because Kang Yu appeared so casual and lighthearted, as if he was nothing more than an ordinary guy walking for a picnic.

— We’re here.

— Oh, great equipment! — Kang Yu exclaimed in admiration as he looked around the gym.

— Let’s see if you can still be so calm in a few moments.

— You too. — Kang Yu shrugged his shoulders while standing in one corner of the room.

Chae Young-ju came up to him.

— Look, this is a crazy idea. Just give up.

— Ha-ha-ha, it’s okay.

— You’ll be sorry... — she said, genuinely concerned.

Kang Yu gave her a little smile.

He knew very well why she was worried, too.

He knew that a newcomer who became a Player two weeks ago should never be able to defeat someone in a big guild.

However, she didn't know him at all.

No one knew.

No one could possibly understand.

— It's time to get started.

Moon Yeon Ho, without even bothering to take out a weapon, put his hands forward, ready for the fight.

— I'll give you a head start— three attacks. You can attack first.

— Ha. I think you've read too much 'Muhyeop.'

(P.P.: Martial Arts novel.)

Yeon Ho didn't say anything.

— Don't try to be so cool, why don't you take out your knife? — Kang Yu advised him, wagging his finger.

Kang Yu, who was sure of his win, didn't want to listen to Moon Yeon Ho's complaints and excuses later when he lost.

'If we're fighting, then I'm not holding back.'

If you have to hide your power, you have to hide it entirely.

If you're going to reveal it, then show the full extent of it.

And now is the right time to show all of his power. It's the only way he can win and get the perfect equipment.

— Hey, I told you to grab your knife.

— I'm not gonna fight a new guy to the best of my ability.

— Oh, is that so? — Kang Yu's lips are stretched out in a smile.

The image of Moon Yeon Ho made Kang Yu burst into laughter. In his eyes, his opponent was powerless.

'Well, there's nothing I can do if he doesn't want to fight seriously.' Kang Yu pulled his hands forward as if he was preparing to shoot with the bow.

He concentrated Magi in his legs and used the Power of Acceleration.

It was as if his body had fired forward.

Moon Yeon Ho, who had refused to pull out his knife and was waiting for Kang Yu to attack, could only stare at him.

Kang Yu used the Power of Acceleration combined with the Power of Heaven and ended up in the air.

Not only did he break the law of inertia, but he also moved at a speed physically impossible.

He twisted in the air and threw his leg forward with all his strength, hitting Moon Yeon Ho in the stomach.

His body flew back, hitting the floor and flying to the wall.

The wall bent a little, and there was smoke surrounding him.

Yeon Ho felt like he was about to vomit, and really threw up on the floor.

Kang Yu's face looked compassionate. His opponent looked so pitiful and shameful now.

— How? — With a cough, Moon Yeon Ho asked.

He looked up from the floor and looked at Kang Yu with a frightened expression.

He didn't even look like himself with how shocked he looked.

— Wha... What was that? How did you... — Anyone would be confused if they were watching. Young-ju couldn't even form a proper sentence.

She was looking between Kang Yu and Yeon Ho, who just threw up.

The new Player, who was only two weeks old, just knocked down a guild member almost at rank 7. And it wasn't just any Player, it was the Chief of Staff. Even in her wildest dreams she wouldn't have imagined that Kang Yu could beat him with one hit. She wondered if there was information that she was missing.

— Ready for the second attack?

Kang Yu stretched his hand out to the staggering, obviously anxious Moon Yeon Ho.

Kang Yu, still in the air, made a black spear and threw it at Yeon Ho.

He dodged the spear and quickly pulled out his knife, pointing the knife at Kang Yu with a completely white face.

— Huh? I thought you were going to let me attack you three times as a handicap. — Kang Yu asked, approaching his opponent with slow steps.

Yeon Ho didn't answer his question. To be more precise, he just didn't have the time to answer it.

He concentrated power in the hand with the knife. There was sweat running down his spine.

'That was dangerous.'

If it weren't for the high-end robe and armor, he'd probably have passed out.

Yeon Ho's eyes were shaking from side to side, stopping at Kang Yu.

'Did you say you just became a Player just two weeks ago?'

What kind of nonsense is that?

Neither Chae Young-ju or even Baek Kang Hyun could become that strong in two weeks.

What was happening could be compared to a situation where a three-year-old kid got back on his feet to fight a fully grown adult.

His strength couldn't be justified just by the fact that he was 'talented.'

— What did you use?

— I didn't use anything. It's just proof that I'm stronger than you.

— Don't talk nonsense! How can a Player who showed up two weeks ago...

— See, now you're trying to change the offer you made when you made a mistake thinking I was weak. You're the one who's talking nonsense.

Yeon Ho didn't answer anything.

— Now that things have gone wrong with your plan, are you going to back out?

— It's... it's...

Watching Yeon Ho look so confused, Kang Yu grinned a little.

A second later, the smile changed to a serious expression, and he uttered in a harsh voice:

— If you're going to do something, then do it properly, fool.

Yeon Ho's face turned sour, and his body was shaking with anger. He felt a sense of shame for doing such a poor job, and his face turned red.

'I think this is his true identity.' Kang Yu looked at Yeon Ho's almost purple face and smiled.

— You bastard! — Yeon Ho, feeling the mocking gaze directed at him, widened his eyes with anger and tightened his grip around the knife.

'I can't let the fight end like this.' Yeon Ho wasn't here alone.

The girl who'd stolen his heart, Chae Young-ju, was watching.

He couldn't show her such a pathetic side of him.

— Killing Knife! — Moon Yeon Ho shouted and his knife stretched to the ceiling with a long bluish beam.

At that moment, his knife began to emit powerful energy and stretched ten meters long.

— Did you have to shout it out?

Yeon Ho didn't answer.

— You did, didn't you? Did you scream on purpose to make it look cool?

— Shut up!

— Hey, why bother trying? You threw up already, it's too late to be cool.

— Oh, you...

— You should have listened when I told you to take out your knife. To grab it now, you look even more lame.

— Ahh! — Yeon Ho yelled, reacting to harsh criticism, and looked fiercely at his opponent.

Kang Yu knew he had pissed Yeon Ho off, and now he was watching his actions in cold blood.

'He's definitely strong.' Kang Yu hadn't been able to assess his opponent's strength up until this moment, but when he saw the sharp knife and the power he put in it, he was convinced that Yeon Ho was really strong.

It's likely that even if Kang Yu used the Power of the Iron Curtain, it would be difficult to stop the enemy.

'If he fought like this from the start, it would have been harder.' If only Yeon Ho had shown off less and started attacking immediately, their fight would've been evenly matched. 'However...'

Kang Yu was just watching Yeon Ho, who was angry and ready to attack any minute.

It didn't matter what his level and abilities were, the fact that he was fighting like this and easily losing his temper showed his lack of experience.

'Power of Darkness.'

Kang Yu's shadow on the floor has lengthened noticeably.

— Die-ee-ee!

If Yeon Ho was in the right state of mind, he would have noticed the shadow approaching him.

But he'd lost his temper to Kang Yu's provocations, and could hardly tell apart his own shadow from the shadow of another person.

'Eclipse'.

After ensuring the shadows crossed, Kang Yu smirked as his Power began to act.

Yeon Ho's knife was pointed at the guy's neck.

— No, Yeon Ho!

Young-ju was ready to intervene because he was no longer attacking Kang Yu for the sake of fighting, but with the clear intention of killing.

In his everyday life, Yeon Ho wasn't an emotional person at all.

It was the first time that Young-ju had seen him so passionate that he lost his mind.

But before she could intercept Yeon Ho's stabbing, Kang Yu turned into black smoke that faded into shadows.

— Wha... what the hell?! — Yeon Ho exclaimed, thrown off.

Trying to find Kang Yu's location, he started looking around quickly.

— Here's the third one. — Kang Yu said when he reappeared from Yeon Ho's shadow.

Using the Power of the Wave, he launched an impulse all over Yeon Ho's body.

He sputtered blood and immediately lost consciousness, falling to the floor.

Young-ju, who'd run to stop the fight, was staring at Kang Yu with her mouth wide open, incapable of comprehending what had just happened.

Kang Yu came closer to her and whispered:

— I told you, I'm stronger than you think.

CHAPTER 36

THE CHOSEN ONE (1)

— I'm sorry about what happened today. Yeon Ho will leave the guild and we will talk to the rest of the members so that it doesn't happen again, — Chae Young-ju said with a serious expression and tilted her head.

She had offered Kang Yu support, but her subordinates weren't even listening to her orders. Of course, she felt humiliated.

— Well, I got the equipment I wanted, so it's okay. — Kang Yu raised the armor in his hand.

Looking down, he read the basic information.

[Information]

Name: Power Armor

Type: Unique

Effect: Resistance to physical damage +200, Resistance to magic damage +80.

Special feature: Increases resistance to physical attacks by twice by 10 seconds (can be used once a day).

'As expected of high-end equipment.' He would have had to use three epic items for the same effect, but now he'd only have to wear a single piece of armor.

'It's not a bad feature either.' Kang Yu figured it could be used with the Power of Darkness to achieve great results.

He turned his head to Young-ju and spoke in a calm tone:

— However, if it happens again next time, I'll have to rethink our 'friendship.' — He'd already obtained the high-end item he wanted, so he thought it would be appropriate

to leave a remark like this now.

What had just happened was a complete failure on Young-ju's part, as head of the guild. Her subordinate disregarded her orders.

Kang Yu agreed to help them in the future, but Yeon Ho, disregarding their alliance, was dismissive and negative towards him from the start.

'Even though I can understand why he was acting like that.'

Kang Yu, who is more of a demon than a human being, was very susceptible to desire.

That included knowing what his opponents want and how much they want.

'He seems to be blinded by the feeling of love.'

'Blinded by love' seems like a trivial phrase, but it perfectly describes the current situation.

— I'm sorry, there's no excuse for his behavior. — Young Ju took a deep breath and apologized again.

It wasn't really because of Yeon Ho's behavior that she was acting like this.

It's because of the Powers that Kang Yu showed in the battle with Yeon Ho.

The person who became a Player two weeks ago fought and defeated a Player with the 7th rank. That was more than enough to change her attitude.

Kang Yu's status has changed from a Player with whom it would be 'good' to have a good relationship to a Player with whom it would be 'perfect' to have a good relationship.

Despite her passionate nature, she couldn't afford to talk to him in a disrespectful manner anymore.

— Then we'll meet again. — Kang Yu waved at her and turned to leave.

Left alone, she kept staring at Kang Yu's back in the distance.

— Ah... — She took a deep breath.

‘Is he really human?’

It was no longer a question of whether or not he had the talent.

It was clear that he had powers that were beyond comprehension.

‘Now I’m not sure I can beat him anymore.’ At this rate of development, it wouldn’t be surprising if he overtook her very soon.

He may become a monster in the future that no one can stop, so she had to think about the future now.

— There may indeed be a World Ranker in Korea.

World Ranker is the term for the top eight strongest Players in the world.

So far, no Korean Players have been able to make it to the top.

It was rumored that Baek Kang Hyun, who holds 1st place in Korea, had a good chance to be one of them, but in the end, he was unable to become a World Ranker.

‘But in Kang Yu’s case... ’

If he continues to develop himself at the same pace, it would not be difficult for him to take a spot in the World Ranker.

Park Hyun Woo came up to Young-ju, who was deep in thought.

— Commander, has Kang Yu left?

— Ah, yes, just now.

— I heard about what happened with Yeon Ho...

— I’m thinking about getting the Commission together and suspending Yeon Ho.

Hyun Woo didn’t say anything.

— Don’t be so surprised. He made a mistake.

— I see. — The guy smiled sadly and nodded his head. — There's something I have to say. —

— What?

— The government has successfully introduced a spy to the Devil's Teachers. If it goes well, they'll be able to catch them by the tail.

When she heard Hyun Woo's words, her eyes sparkled with interest.

— Tell me more about it.

* * *

— Let's see... — After separating with Young-ju and coming home, Kang Yu opened his status window.

[Status Window]

Player name: Oh Kang Yu

Level: 34 [Rank 4]

Special Ability Rank 1: The Power of the Devourer (Class: ????).

Special skills are sealed.

Special Ability Rank 2: Overwhelming Hunger (Class: C)

Special Ability Rank 3: Thirst for Maryok (Class: A)

Special Ability Rank 4: Master of Magi (Class: A)

Strength: 23

Endurance: 21

Physical ability: 20

Maryok: 0

Magi: 53

Intellect: 11

Wisdom: 13

Effect of Equipment used:

Resistance to physical attacks: 330

Resistance to magical attacks: 170

If someone could see his status window, they'd be surprised at such unusual readings.

If he were an ordinary Player of the 4th rank, 30 units of Magi should have been impossible. But Kang Yu had over 50.

'The other parameters are also quite high.' The most important indicator for him, of course, was Magi, but strength, endurance, and physical strength weren't any less important.

Of course, it was a waste of Magi when he used it to physically strengthen his body.

If the other parameters could strengthen the body as much as Magi strengthens it, then he could use that Magi for more purposes.

'Intelligence and wisdom are useless to me.'

Those were the two parameters that have been useless to Kang Yu from the start.

'It's a pity I can't choose which parameter to raise.'

Each time he reached a higher level, randomly selected parameters increased by a random number of units.

Kang Yu heard that after getting 2nd rank, the system decides which parameters are necessary for a special ability to function better.

In his case, however, it was quite the opposite. Anything would increase except Magi.

‘I wonder if that’s because I already have a lot of Magi.’ The system must have assumed so.

Now, at level 34, he already had so much Magi that he shouldn’t have.

Considering the fact that it becomes more difficult to raise the parameters, it’s quite understandable why the system gave no increase in Magi each time he leveled up.

‘I guess it’s because I crossed level 30.’ This would explain the slow rise of all the parameters, including the Magi.

— It’s a pity. — If Kang Yu had the chance, he would have been happy to invest exclusively in the rise of Magi. — However, by defeating Hellhound, I actually exceeded my plans. —

Originally, he was just going to get to level 30, but thanks to killing the Hellhound by himself, he rose to level 34 at once.

‘If it goes on like this, I’ll soon get rank 5.’

Not to mention, by agreeing to the deal with Red Rose, Kang Yu gained access to higher level gates.

Since he could skip the Level B Gate and go hunting directly in the Level A Gate, the leveling process will go much faster.

‘I think I’ve got a bit of leeway.’

The current situation was very different from the moment he first arrived on Earth, when he couldn’t use his powers at all because he had no Magi.

In the battle with Yeon Ho, he realized that he had achieved great results in the Player World.

Or at least his powers have begun to return to him.

Now that he had the opportunity, he decided he should take care of Dae Su and Han Sol. Just as Young-ju spared no expense to invest in his development, he would try to do his best for Dae Su and Han Sol.

‘She’s doing the right thing by investing in prospective Players in advance.’

Investing in talented Players from the start is beneficial for the future.

Talent and development opportunities become even more valuable with the help of investors.

‘Dae Su and Han Sol also deserve to be invested in.’

Of course, compared to Kang Yu, they were weak. But they were only weak compared to him.

Among the normal Players, a tank with a special ability of Class A and a Class B support was considered talented.

Not to mention, they were friendly with Kang Yu...

If he made efforts in developing them at this point in time, the chances of them betraying him in the future were extremely low.

‘It’s worth going hunting together with them tomorrow.’

But it wasn’t in his plans to help them level up quickly. On the contrary, that would only prevent them from developing to their full potential.

It was most important for them to gain battle experience right now.

As long as they fought on the battlefield, they would naturally be able to develop their skills on their own.

— Time to go home.

Kang Yu headed back to the house feeling satisfied, carrying his new armor on his shoulder.

CHAPTER 37

THE CHOSEN ONE (2)

— Kang Yu, come here!

On the next day, Kang Yu and Han Sol went together to meet Dae Su at the designated meeting point.

Dae Su had arrived early, and cheerily waved to Kang Yu as soon as he spotted him.

— Please be quiet. — Kang Yu narrowed his eyes with a shake of his head, when he saw Dae Su's teasing smirk as if to point out that he'd arrived with Han Sol.

— He-he-he, did everything go well yesterday?

— Yes, it was fine.

— Thanks God! Also, Kang Yu, these are the guys I told you about. — He pointed at a girl with brown hair and a guy with a sword on his hip

— Wow, — said Kang Yu as he saw the guy with the sword.

He was astoundingly handsome. His appearance was so ideal that you could compare it with a perfectly made sculpture.

Just staring at him made it seem like everything around him was painted in brighter colors.

— That handsome one is Kim Si Hoon, and the little girl's name is Choi Eun Bi.

— Hey, who's a little girl?!

— Ha, if you aren't a little girl, then who is?

— Well, you look like you're way over 40 years old.

— Wh... what?!

Eun Bi, after ending the quarrel with Dae Su, walked towards Kang Yu.

Her eyes were lit up and she extended her hand.

— Are you the one who Dae Su admires? I've heard many things about you! Also, you can address me as 'you', Kang Yu oppa!

'Is this a second Dae Su?' Kang Yu held back a laugh as he stared at the friendly looking girl.

— Alright. Then let's begin with discussing our abilities and...

— Kyaa-a-a!! Unni, are you the support? You are so beautiful! And your boobs are just wow! Even Cerberus would turn all of his heads to look at you.

(Editor's Note: For those who don't know, 'Unni' is how girls call their older sisters or generally other girls who are older than them.)

— Ah?... Thank you.

— Selfie! Let's take one! I will brag to all my friends about this later!

Han Sol didn't know what to say.

Kang Yu, who couldn't finish what he was saying, watched with surprise at how Eun Bi took Han Sol's hand and dragged her off somewhere.

Soon, the guy with a sword hanging on his belt came up to Kang Yu and reached out his hand.

— It's nice to meet you. I've heard a lot about you from Dae Su. My name is Kim Si Hoon.

— Ah, yes.

— I'm on level 12, and I have a class A ability. As you can guess, I'm a Damager.

He gave Kang Yu all the necessary information clearly, and he spoke politely with confidence.

A Class A special ability at Rank 2, huh.

‘He looks like a comic book character.’

Kang Yu extended his hand in return.

In fact, the boy was so perfect, with his beautiful character and outstanding abilities, that Kang Yu felt his stomach twist. Kang Yu knew he was not the best person to create a party with.

‘It’s fortunate that these guys don’t seem like Andras Guild members.’

Kang Yu realized that he felt possessive over these two Players. He wanted them.

His demonic desire spread all over his body.

He didn’t get even a drop of bad or repulsive feeling in Si Hoon or Eun Bi.

He didn’t know why neither of them had joined a guild yet, but Dae Su seemed right in saying they were trustworthy.

— And Eun Bi is a magician with a special ability of Class B.

— I see, thank you.

— She’s a little noisy... Sorry.

— That’s okay.

Kang Yu was going to continue speaking with Si Hoon, but Dae Su came up to them, his strong chest puffed up in triumph, and asked:

— How is it? Don’t you think you can trust them too?

— Yes, I do.

— Heh heh, it’s because I’m Kang Dae Su! You can’t hide good people from me!

— Is that why you were almost killed by your own party recently?

— Well... that's...

Kang Yu made a good point, and Dae Su looked away sheepishly.

— We met thanks to God's will!

Kang Yu didn't answer. He didn't know how to answer that kind of nonsensical statement and just stared at the person he was talking to.

Dae Su coughed and changed the subject:

— Mm-hmm. So what do you think of that composition?

— At first glance, the party looks perfect.

One tank, two damagers, plus a buffer and a support in one person.

The line up was perfect, and they didn't need extra Players.

Moreover, the team's abilities were around the same level: two Players with special ability class A, two Players with special ability class B.

It wasn't just an ordinary hunting party, but more of a monster party ready to destroy everything in its path.

'This is pretty good.' Kang Yu looked at the four people in front of him and his eyes shone.

Looking at this party, he could see that there was huge hidden potential.

Just as he had once made Pallock and other powerful demons his subordinates, now he has gathered a party of talented Players.

'But I need to keep an eye on them for a little longer.'

In fact, capable Players and a good distribution of roles didn't make a party perfect.

There were plenty of points to be assessed, from a sense of battle to the ability to strategize and think logically.

‘However, it’s worth taking them in.’

If they develop according to Kang Yu’s plans, they would likely become great helpers for him.

— I’ll hunt with you today.

— Huh? You’re coming, too?

— Yes. And if I see any flaws or mistakes, I’ll let you know.

— Woah! We’ll be sure to listen to your amendments! Thank you, Hyung! — Dae Su responded excitedly with sparkling eyes.

(P.P.: Hyung is a guy’s address to a guy older than himself. It gives a closer shade to the relationship.)

‘It’s an investment in the future.’

Kang Yu, who had already gained a passionate desire to form a good team, looked at the Players in front of him again.

He was sure that by investing in them now, he would get a huge return and benefit in the future.

Of course he looked forward to it.

— Let’s go straight to the gate. And unless there’s an emergency, I’ll just be standing behind you.

— Heh heh. Okay, Hyung. — Dae Su, holding a powerful shield that covers most of his body, headed toward the gate.

As they walked to the gate, their team immediately became an object of attention.

— Look at him! He’s beautiful!

— Is he some kind of celebrity?

— The girl next to him is hot too!

Of course, they caught attention because of Si Hoon and Han Sol's looks.

However, they weren't the only ones who got attention.

There was another very prominent person at the party.

— Ahhh! It's a monster!

Dae Su, who was two meters tall and was walking normally, scared a little kid into crying.

— Huh? Baby, I'm not a monster.

— Ahhh! Mom!

While Dae Su remained confused, the girl cried even louder.

Dae Su, not understanding what was happening, turned his head away.

'What should I do?' He didn't know how to calm the child down.

But more and more eyes were turning to them.

Kang Yu sighed and decided to console the child, but Si Hoon was ahead of him and got there first.

He went down on one knee and stroked the girl's head lightly.

— It's okay.

She looked at Si Hoon with her teary eyes.

— Even though he looks like this, he's not scary at all.

— He isn't?

— Yes. So don't cry.

— Okay. — The girl's gaze immediately brightened up.

The guy got up and returned the little kid to her mother with a light smile.

There was nothing special about what was happening, but since it was Si Hoon, it looked more like a scene from a movie.

If Kang Yu had done the same thing, it wouldn't have looked so cool.

'That guy...' Kang Yu exhaled again. 'He looks too much like a movie protagonist.'

* * *

The green orcs, exhaling noisily, were waving their heavy clubs.

They were about 160 centimeters tall.

Compared to an adult boy, they were much shorter, but due to their muscular build, they were strong opponents.

However, Dae Su was able to push three monsters away with just one movement of his shield.

Dae Su, who was two meters tall with a physically strong body, could easily shove them aside.

— What do you think, you jerks?!

Dae Su, who pushed back three Orcs with his shield, laughed loudly with pride.

Once they fell to the ground, the Orcs rolled from side to side, unable to rise to their feet.

— Lightning strike! — Eun Bi shouted out in a clear voice, and the end of her staff starting to sparkle with a charge of Maryok, which then, turning into lightning bolts, shot towards the Orcs.

— Dae Su, there's six more in the back!

— Roger that!

Dae Su concentrated energy in his shield and turned around, thrusting forward.

— This way, you bastards!

The Orcs, seeing the tantalizing glow, ran towards him.

— The Power of Light!

— Oh, thank you!

The Light Charge created by Han Sol headed for Dae Su's body, after which she created a Light Arrow and shot the monster.

Thanks to Han Sol's buff, Dae Su's body became even stronger.

Si Hoon cleverly flew to the Orcs who had attacked Dae Su's shield, and smoothly cut their throats with his sword.

Even disregarding Si Hoon's attractive appearance, Kang Yu liked him because he was very skilled with the sword.

In a flash, all six monsters lost their lives at the hands of Si Hoon.

— Huh! As much as I love Kang Yu hyung, Si Hoon, you're awesome! Did you do kendo before you became a Player, by any chance?

— Oh, yeah, not for long. It was just a hobby.

— But your sword skills don't look like an amateur's. — Dae Su kept admiring Si Hoon's excellent skills and turned his head towards Kang Yu: — What do you think, Kang Yu? Everybody has cool skills, right? —

Kang Yu nodded his head slightly in response.

Like Dae Su said, you couldn't tell from the outside that these Players were only at second rank.

— Heh, heh, heh. What did I say? There's no amazing Player who can hide from m-

— First, I'll tell you what needs to be corrected, — Kang Yu said in a calm tone, cutting off Dae Su's bravado.

Since high-caliber Players have gathered in their party, of course their hunting ability was high.

However, they also had flaws.

‘Shortcomings that need to be corrected.’

Kang Yu narrowed his eyes and continued.

CHAPTER 38

THE CHOSEN ONE (3)

— First of all, Dae Su, you react quickly and lure monsters well. However, you try to attack and defeat them with physical strength alone. You attack even when it's not necessary. You use your strength in vain and when you eventually tire yourself out, you make yourself an easy target. Don't try to do everything alone, and don't rush to attack. Go with the flow.

— Oh... I understand. — Excited by Kang Yu's first criticism, Dae Su stepped up and nodded slightly.

Kang Yu turned towards Choi Eun Bi.

— Eun Bi, when you kill monsters, don't use so much magic. Si Hoon is the main Damager, and you should act as his assistant. Just now, you were so passionate about killing those three monsters that when five other monsters attacked, there was nothing you could do against them. Isn't that right?

— Ye... that's right, oppa.

— It's enough to paralyze the monsters with a lightning strike. Save your strength for when you really need it.

— Got it!

— Han Sol.

— Yes, Kang Yu, — said the girl who was excited to hear his feedback for everyone.

Kang Yu continued in a calm tone:

— You pick great times to buff. But using arrows to hold back monsters is risky. You're not hunting alone, so you have to act with caution.

— Ah... sorry.

— Just be more careful next time. Si Hoon...

— Yes. — He looked at Kang Yu calmly and waited for him to continue.

— You don't have to fix anything. So far, you're doing your job perfectly.

— Thank you, — he replied in a calm tone and nodded.

Si Hoon's appearance showed that he wasn't too surprised by that assessment. Rather, he'd expected it.

Kang Yu thought for a moment when he saw Si Hoon react like that

'He's behaving more confidently.'

Even Kang Yu, who had been fighting for ten thousand years and had been building up his skills, could tell Si Hoon's sense of battle was unusually good.

Even though he didn't have a lot of combat experience and acted a bit naive, Kang Yu admired this guy.

'I guess that's what they call a genius.' Despite his lack of experience, he adapted to the combat conditions at an alarming rate.

Si Hoon could fight with his sword in ways that Kang Yu had taken decades to learn.

'Maybe that's how Young-ju feels when she looks at me.' Kang Yu seemed good at everything, particularly in combat, in her eyes.

Since Young-ju didn't know about his past, he seemed like an extremely talented player to her.

But Kang Yu wasn't really such a talented person.

The reason for his 'talent' was the time, ten thousand years, during which he was able to train and gradually accumulate experience.

But Kim Si Hoon was different from him.

'He's real.' He was a naturally, damn talented man.

He was so talented that during this battle with the Orcs, he already improved his movements a little bit more.

‘A diamond in the rough’ was an expression perfectly suited to Si Hoon.

— Let’s go even further, — Kang Yu said, wondering how much more Si Hoon could improve.

— Good idea.

— Heh heh! This time, we’ll be even better, Hyung! — Dae Su announced, motivated as he raised his shield.

The party traversed deep into the forest and started hunting for more Orcs.

This time, it wasn’t only Si Hoon but everyone who, taking Kang Yu’s advice into account, proved themselves to be even better than before.

‘If they keep this up, they’ll rise to the Level C Gate in a month.’

Taking into account that regular Players reach Level C in two months, they would become stronger at a much quicker pace.

But, of course, there was no way they could compete with Kang Yu who reached the C gate in just five days.

— Oh? Hyung, who’s that monster over there? It doesn’t look like an orc.

— Huh? — When Kang Yu heard Dae Su saying that, he came forth from the shadows.

The creature that had appeared was a wolf with two large horns on its forehead.

The healthy wolf with black fur glared fiercely at Dae Su.

‘Demonic Wolf.’ Kang Yu frowned.

Of course, it wasn’t the Hellhound he’d seen recently, but this creature was also a resident of the First Thousandth Circle of Hell.

— Oh? Ohhh? — Dae Su, whom the Demon Wolf was running towards at great speed,

confidently put his shield forward with a serious look.

However, it was clear to anyone that the Demonic Wolf was far superior to Dae Su.

Kang Yu's expression changed, and he put one hand forward.

He wasn't planning to interfere unless something out of the ordinary happened, and this situation more than fit that description.

Even though Dae Su was an excellent tank, this was not a good time for him to prove himself.

At this point in time, no one from the party could stand up to a creature from Hell.

'Well, why...' Kang Yu sighed as he stared firmly at the Demonic Wolf that should only be found in Hell, just like the Hellhound.

Kang Yu surrounded himself with strong Magi.

But before Kang Yu could attack the wolf, Si Hoon rushed at it.

— Hyu... hyung!

— Get back here!

The sword thrown at the wolf by Si Hoon glowed blue.

His sword was moving at a speed incomparable to just now.

The tip of the sword left a long cut on the back of the Demonic Wolf.

The wounded wolf howled in pain, then growled low before rushing forward at Si Hoon.

The guy deftly stuck his sword out and countered the attack.

But a Player of the 2nd rank couldn't be strong enough to stop a monster from Hell.

Si Hoon was thrown back and fell to the ground.

However, even though he was attacked by the Demonic Wolf, he staggered up from the ground, refusing to accept defeat.

The animal threw itself again towards Si Hoon, but at that moment Kang Yu jumped on its back from behind.

He used the Power of a Thousand to increase his strength and hit the Demonic Wolf straight on the head.

With a single blow, its head was blown apart.

A blue notice came up before his eyes.

[You have defeated a D level splinter from the rift.]

[Level increased by 1 unit]

— Ha-ha, thank you very much, Kang Yu. — After taking a deep breath, Si Hoon bowed to him.

Dae Su came over and shouted out loud:

— Wow! As expected of Kang Yu hyung! You took out a monster like that with one blow! For me, I don't think there's anyone like you!

Kang Yu decided not to answer him.

— Um, Si Hoon, what was that blue light from your sword?

— Oh, it was...

— You sure you only have two ranks? Just now, it glowed with such a bright light!

— Yes, that's right. — Si Hoon looked awkwardly at Dae Su, who appeared agitated.

Kang Yu was quietly observing Si Hoon's behavior.

'He's strong.'

By fighting the Demonic Wolf, he showed even higher sword skill mastery and sense

of battle.

He was unusually strong even for a Player with a Class A special ability at rank 2.

Too strong.

‘It reminds me of the situation with Moon Yeon Ho.’

Maybe Yeon Ho felt the same way when he was watching Kang Yu.

‘Does he really have only two ranks?’

In Kang Yu’s case, there was a reason why he was superior to other Players in his rank.

But the situation with Si Hoon was quite different.

He certainly couldn’t have been in Hell for ten thousand years like Kang Yu.

Suddenly, Kang Yu looked at him with suspicion and used the Observer’s power.

The Magi emitting from his own body headed towards Si Hoon.

[Master Magician (Class: A) hides the use of Power]

Along with the sound of notification, Magi disappeared from the visible eye.

The Magi, hidden, easily enveloped Si Hoon’s body.

[Status Window]

[Player’s name: Kim Si Hoon]

— Huh? — Kang Yu tilted his head sideways, surprised by the status window that appeared before his eyes.

In the status window, Si Hoon’s name was clearly indicated.

‘The Power of Observation can do that?’ Kang Yu was just going to check if Si Hoon was hiding some kind of ability, but he found out something new about his own power.

In order for the Observer's Power to see more of Si Hoon's status window, he directed more Magi towards him.

[Level: 14 (Rank 2)]

'I really can see his status window.' His eyes shone with this new piece of information.

'Anyway, he really is only at rank 2.'

According to the status window, Si Hoon was at level 14.

Originally, he said he was at level 12, but there was nothing unusual about raising it to level 14 during this hunt.

'Then what is it?' It had to mean that he possessed a strong power at rank 2.

Kang Yu tilted his head and used the Observer's Power with more concentration.

[Rank 1 Special Ability: Descendant of Musin* (Class: SSS)]

(P.P.: Musin — God of war, lord of war.)

The power of Musin has not been fully harnessed, making it inaccessible.

[Special ability 2nd rank: Sharper than Sword (Class: A)]

— What? — Kang Yu uttered in surprise when he saw Si Hoon's special abilities.

[Special Group: The Chosen One. It's the spirit of Musin named Jeon Tae Hwan. A hero who is destined to be the savior of the Earth.]

Strength: 15

Vitality: 16

Physical ability: 13

Maryok: 25

Intellect: 8

Wisdom: 9]

‘What the... ’ Kang Yu involuntarily dropped his mouth open when he finished reading Si Hoon’s status window. ‘Who is he?’

An SSS class ability.

A man who possesses the spirit of the great Musin.

A hero who will save the Earth.

‘Is he the actual protagonist?’ Kang Yu cautiously turned his gaze on Si Hoon.

CHAPTER 39

THE CHOSEN ONE (4)

To be honest, when Kang Yu first got to Hell, he felt very happy.

He'd felt like he had become the main character in a novel.

Before entering Hell, he had lived a sad life in poverty, and then, like a hero in the novels he always read, he was able to change everything about himself, which he felt endlessly overjoyed about.

Of course, over time, facing mortal danger dozens of times, his opinion toward it had changed.

In Hell, he was not really the main character or anything like that, he was a miserable creature at the bottom of the food chain.

'It can't be...' He looked at Si Hoon with an unreadable expression on his face. Attractive with a perfect appearance, a kind character and polite behavior. 'Is he the real protagonist?'

Kang Yu looked at Si Hoon's status once again and looked at him in greater confusion.

— Hmm. — He sighed and sank into deep thought.

'The fate of becoming the savior of the Earth...' In fact, it seems pretty convincing.

Kang Yu didn't know who Musin Jeon Tae Hwan was, but he definitely had to be more than just a strong man to be called Musin.

Even his descendant had a special SSS ability as a Player, so Musin himself couldn't have been a weak person.

'I wonder if that's why he's so good with the sword.'

The simple 'talent' of his quick and clear movements could not be explained.

He was strong, and constantly improved at an incredible speed.

Kang Yu kept looking at Si Hoon while thinking.

He was hesitant about what to do with this man.

‘We can give him all the support he needs and continue to build friendships with powerful Players.’

That’s exactly what Chae Young-ju had chosen to do.

Maintaining contact and providing aid to talented Players who were developing their skills.

It’s a fairly simple but effective way to keep good Players by your side with minimal effort.

‘But this method also has its shortcomings.’

The most important disadvantage of friendship is that you cannot use a friend.

And in the worst case scenario, Si Hoon could just take advantage of the help provided to him, and later betray them when there were no benefits for him to take.

‘Si Hoon does not look like that kind of person.’

He looks like a good person who would come to help in a dangerous situation, so the probability of betrayal on his part was low.

‘But... ’ Kang Yu looked down on Han Sol healing Si Hoon’s wounds. ‘No one knows how it could turn out.’

Kim Si Hoon is a kind man.

Even if he doesn’t betray Kang Yu, there was still a chance that he might betray someone else.

If Dae Su and Han Sol become familiar with him and become good friends, then who knows what could happen.

‘Shouldn’t I stop the possibility of a dangerous situation before it gets too late?’

Si Hoon was very different from Han Sol and Dae Su.

The two of them were talented Players and were likely to become highly ranked Players as they developed.

But nothing more than that.

No matter how strong they become, they will never be powerful enough to pose a threat to Kang Yu.

But Si Hoon is different.

When he fully unlocks all his special abilities and masters his SSS class ability, and keeps going up level by level, he’ll become crazy powerful.

So much so that he’d become a real threat.

That’s why, in case of anything, it’d be good to expose him.

‘No...’ Hesitating, Kang Yu looked down. ‘That’s too wasteful.’

Getting rid of a player as talented as Si Hoon just because of potential betrayal is too foolish.

For now, Si Hoon is more like a winning lottery ticket.

If Kang Yu approaches this situation correctly and gains Si Hoon as a member of their team, he could become an even more powerful subordinate than Pallock had been.

‘I’d like to make him one of my own, because if I leave him unattended, there will be a lot of things to worry about.’ Kang Yu put his hands on his chest, rubbed his chin and continued to think: ‘In that case...’

His eyes lit up.

A wonderful idea came to his mind.

A way for him to help Si Hoon develop and make him one of his allies.

‘If not now, then never.’ The corners of Kang Yu’s lips stretched out in a smile.

He thought he was very lucky to know Si Hoon’s true strength right now.

— Kang Yu, did something happen? — Han Sol approached Kang Yu when she finished treating the others’ wounds.

He plastered a reassuring smile on his face and answered calmly:

— Oh, yeah, I was just thinking a bit.

— Ha-ha, what kind of monster do you think that was? It’s the first time I’ve ever seen it. If it wasn’t for you, we’d have a huge problem.

— Who knows... I’m also wondering why that monster appeared at the D-level gate,
— Kang Yu said as he approached the dead body of the Demonic Wolf, looking at it from all sides.

Kang Yu still didn’t know exactly what a splinter was or why creatures from Hell appeared at the Gates.

— How is Si Hoon feeling?

— He’s feeling much better. It’ll hurt him to move right now, but he should be able to walk normally.

— Mm. — Kang Yu nodded a little and headed for Si Hoon.

— Are you feeling okay?

— Ah, yes. Thanks to Han Sol, I feel much better.

— Oh, thank God.

— If it wasn’t for you, we’d have suffered a lot more. Thank you. I heard from Dae Su that you’re very strong. — Si Hoon stood up and smiled like a good person.

His smile seemed to shine a bright light on everything around him.

— That’s right! I’ve never seen a player as strong as Kang Yu before! — Dae Su knocked

on his chest and continued praising the guy. — He's not just strong! He's as brave as a real knight. It wasn't so long ago that he dealt with the bad guys in the Andras Guild.
—

— Wow.

— Heh-heh-heh! Kang Yu is the man to whom I will devote my whole life to!

— You found a good hen. — Si Hoon nodded lightly and turned towards Kang Yu.

(Editor's Note: I'm assuming 'hen' is used in reference to how chicks faithfully follow the mother hen.)

In his eyes, Kang Yu's credibility was rising.

— Si Hoon, you're really something too! You're the first Player I know who's so strong at rank 2.

— You're exaggerating.

— Heh, heh, heh. But why aren't you joining a guild? With that strength, you'd be invited to many guilds. I heard the Mir guild is looking for recruits. You're not interested?

— I don't plan on joining a guild. Especially not Mir Guild.

Once he said the name of the guild, the look on Si Hoon's face grew colder and he frowned.

When Dae Su noticed it, he scratched the back of his head and continued:

— Huh. Oh, I see. Is there something wrong with 'Mir'?

— Nothing worth talking about. — said Si Hoon, who had acted friendly up till now.

Dae Su realized he'd probably hit a nerve and bowed his head down.

— It seems like something bad must have happened with them. I shouldn't have asked.

— No. It's just that it's complicated... I'm sorry for reacting so rudely. — Si Hoon put aside his irritation, smiled kindly again and relaxed his tense muscles. — I feel better

now, so we can keep going... —

— I think it's better to stop our hunt for today. I mean, your body hasn't fully recovered.

— I'm okay, really.

— There's no need to overdo it. It's enough that we met today, we can continue hunting tomorrow.

— Um... Got it. — Si Hoon nodded and turned around.

Kang Yu gathered everyone and headed for the gate's exit.

— Hyung! Are you coming tomorrow, too?

— No, you guys will hunt by yourselves tomorrow. And don't forget my advice.

— Ah...

— It's not like I can keep an eye on you guys forever.

— I see. Hyung! I, Kang Dae Su, will focus on hunting so I can raise my level and start hunting with you!

— Okay. I'll be waiting. — Kang Yu smiled as they came out from the gate.

— Well, I'll be going this way.

— Yes, I'll see you later, Oppa!

After the hunt was over, everyone headed home.

Han Sol and Kang Yu went to the railway station together, since they lived in the same house.

— Han Sol.

— Yes, Kang Yu?

— I need to go somewhere for a little while, so head home first.

— Is it... something important?

— Yes, it is.

— Okay, I understand. What do you want for dinner?

— Eat alone tonight. I'll probably be late.

Han Sol, who was looking forward to going home with Kang Yu, looked at him with disappointment and went to the station.

— Well... — Kang Yu, after parting with Han Sol, turned to go in another direction. — Let's get started. —

With a smile, he pushed off the ground with light movement and went up in the air.

* * *

— Ha... the Mir Guild, huh... — Kang Yu remembered Dae Su and Si Hoon's recent conversation.

Kang Yu knew a man from that guild. He felt a pain in his chest when he remembered that person.

He shook his head, trying to forget those unpleasant feelings.

— Kang Yu? — At that moment, Si Hoon, on his way to the bus stop home, spotted Kang Yu and raised his head in surprise.

Kang Yu looked around and came up to Si Hoon.

— I needed to talk to you, so I'm here.

— Did something happen?

— Um... it's something serious. Can we go somewhere where there are no people?

— Okay. — Si Hoon nodded his head and they went into a deserted alley. He turned his face to Kang Yu. — What is it that you want to tell me...? —

Kang Yu hit him in the solar plexus.

Not expecting the attack, Si Hoon grabbed his stomach and fell to the ground.

— Ah... what the...

— It's just to be on the safe side.

— Safe side...? For what!

Kang Yu sat on top of Si Hoon, who was lying on the ground, and continued indifferently:

— You're going to become stronger and stronger, much more than the other Players. So I'd like to have a good relationship with you.

— You want a good relationship...?

— Simply put, I want us to be friends.

— Ah! You do this and you want to talk about friendship?! — Si Hoon, angered by Kang Yu's actions, tried to get up.

Kang Yu looked down at him and the corner of his lips twitched.

— That's what the safety net is for.

— What do you...

Kang Yu concentrated Magi in his hands and thrust it into Si Hoon's chest.

Through his skin and bones, Kang Yu's hands touched the boy's heart.

Mustering up as much Magi as he could, he used the Power.

[Power of Subordination]

A Power that can make a person submit to Kang Yu's will.

Simply put, the Power that makes a person subordinate to a demon.

It was even more powerful than the Power of Fear. In fact, Kang Yu had a lot of these kinds of powers.

— Ah... Stop it...

— Don't worry about it. You'll forget about what just happened here.

Kang Yu looked down on him and continued peacefully:

— Once you open your eyes, you'll continue about your day like nothing ever happened. You'll continue to hunt monsters and increase your strength just like you did today. As you continue to develop with Han Sol and Dae Su, you will become the most powerful party.

— Huh!

— Ah, and if you become my subordinate, you can use some of my powers. They'll be a great help to your development.

After making sure that Si Hoon was completely under his control, Kang Yu pulled his hand out.

There wasn't a single wound left on Si Hoon's chest where he pulled his hand out from. In fact, all his clothes were still in a normal condition.

— Ahh... — Si Hoon waved his hands in the air like he was trying to grab something.

— Don't worry... — Kang Yu caught his hands and whispered quietly: — We're going to become the best of friends. —

CHAPTER 40

THE CHOSEN ONE (5)

— Um... — Si Hoon felt the cold stone floor underneath him and opened his eyes.

‘What happened?’ He looked around and cocked his head sideways, confused.

Last he remembered, he was on his way to the bus stop to catch a bus home after he’d parted with his teammates.

— So then, what happened?

That was where his memories came to an end.

From the moment when he almost got to the bus stop and the moment he opened his eyes, he remembered nothing.

Si Hoon took his phone out of his pocket to check the time.

— It’s been an hour.

The last time he looked at the time was an hour ago.

— Ah! — When he tried to remember what had happened within that hour, he felt a sharp headache.

Si Hoon grabbed his aching head and got up from the ground.

— Did I faint?

They’d met an unknown creature today while hunting at the Gate.

He was attacked by the monster when he tried to fight it.

‘It was dangerous.’ Remembering what happened, goosebumps rose all through his body.

The monster looked so frightening, it shook him to the core.

‘I thought I was all healed.’ Han Sol had said she healed everything, so he thought he was cured, but perhaps the wounds were worse than they thought.

‘Who would have thought it would come to fainting... ’ He looked at his body and squinted.

‘There’s still a long way to go... ’

Two weeks ago, when he first became a Player, the spirit of Musin awakened in his body.

However, he still has not been able to communicate with it or learn anything about this spirit other than what is indicated in the status window.

‘Because I’m weak.’ Si Hoon grinded his teeth anxiously.

He’s too weak to use all the power that’s sleeping inside him.

‘I must get stronger.’ He clenched his fists tightly and he had a determined glint in his eyes.

He had a good reason to be stronger.

Only then will he be able to finish what he started.

‘Kim Yeong Hoon.’ He repeated the name in his head.

That was the name of the deputy commander of one of the five most powerful guilds, the deputy commander of Mir Guild.

‘Garbage.’ When Si Hoon remembered this man, his anger would flare up subconsciously.

— Phew. — He took a deep breath to quell his anger.

‘For now, I must endure.’ If it was now, Si Hoon knew he would fail if he fought that man in battle.

— I wonder if I become as strong as Kang Yu, will that be enough? — He smiled bitterly

as he remembered what he saw today.

Oh Kang Yu.

Si Hoon didn't know where exactly Kang Yu was hiding while watching over the party, but when he saw Kang Yu defeat the mysterious monster with a single blow, his strength was clear.

'He was strong.' Not only was Kang Yu at a high level, his special abilities also seemed high.

Even though Si Hoon himself had a special SSS-class ability that Kang Yu certainly didn't have, he was much weaker than Kang Yu.

'Still, he wasn't just strong.' He understood the reason why Dae Su was so devoted to Kang Yu.

He had a unique charisma that attracts people to him.

Just looking at how he went to a low-level gate to help his friends get better, he could tell Kang Yu had a good character.

'I think he's a good person.' When he thought of Kang Yu, Si Hoon smiled a little.

They hadn't met very long ago, but Kang Yu already made a lasting good impression.

'Kang Yu is a person I can trust.' Si Hoon thought it would be good to be friends with him as he walked to the bus stop again.

* * *

'That's right, I'm a good man.' Kang Yu, who was hiding in the alley, had been watching Si Hoon since he rose from the ground. He smiled. 'It was a success.'

Kang Yu wasn't 100% sure that his plan would succeed because the spirit of Musin lives in Si Hoon, but fortunately everything went well. Kang Yu has completely subdued the guy.

'If I'd found out about his secret later, the probability of failure would have been much higher.'

The Power of Subordination isn't that easy to use, because its effectiveness depends on the strength of both the person who applies it and the person it's applied to.

Kang Yu spent a lot of Magi to use it.

If he had learned about Si Hoon even a week later, the probability that he wouldn't have been able to make him his subordinate was many times greater.

There were several notifications.

[Subordination of the soul was a success. Kim Si Hoon is now registered as your subordinate.]

[Are there any instructions for the subordinate?]

— Delay the order.

[Order delayed. You may give an order to your subordinate at any time.]

Kang Yu, while reading the notifications, smiled even wider.

'Perfect. I can give an order anywhere and anytime.'

Otherwise, Kang Yu's efforts wouldn't have made a difference.

— Well, I've taken care of that myself... Now all I have to do is watch Si Hoon's development.

Kang Yu wasn't planning to interfere with his life.

No, unless something out of the ordinary happens, Kang Yu wouldn't use it at all.

'It's just a safety net.' So far, Si Hoon hasn't threatened him nor showed signs of betraying him.

On the contrary, he was satisfied with their first meeting and wanted to become friends with Kang Yu.

When he heard Si Hoon call him a good person, Kang Yu was certain that the guy was interested in developing a good friendship with him.

‘There’s no need to get a collar for a dog that doesn’t bite its owner.’

Kang Yu was determined.

— I’ll help you, so do your best to develop yourself, Si Hoon, — Kang Yu said with a big smile while watching him get on the bus.

If everything goes according to plan and Si Hoon keeps improving, he’ll become a lot stronger than Pallock.

Since his Man Ma Jung is still sealed and Kang Yu has to find and fight the Devil’s Teacher, Si Hoon would play a very important role.

It was especially important for him to keep hunting at the gate with Han Sol and Dae Su and protect them with his strong character and skills.

‘I don’t know when there will be another creature from Hell at the gate.’

Kang Yu couldn’t go hunting at a low-level gate everyday and keep an eye on his teammates, so it’s very convenient that Si Hoon has appeared, who can replace Kang Yu in protecting them at the gate.

‘Also, by protecting his teammates, he will develop his skills much more quickly.’

Not to mention, now that Si Hoon was subordinate to Kang Yu, he’d be able to borrow some of his master’s strength.

That means that the spirit of Musin who lives in Si Hoon will also be strengthened by Kang Yu’s strength.

He would definitely develop faster than anyone else.

‘Here it is, the need for mutual help between comrades.’ Kang Yu smiled and nodded.

He felt no remorse for what he had done to his subordinate by force.

He’s spent too much time in Hell to feel remorse for something like that.

‘I alone must reap the benefits from Si Hoon’s power.’ Kang Yu licked his lips and smiled a little.

Anyone would take advantage of this opportunity.

It was how he learned to survive in Hell.

‘It’s time to go home.’

Since the Power of Subordination required a lot of Magi, Kang Yu was completely exhausted.

‘I wonder if Han Sol had dinner already.’

To celebrate Kang Yu’s successful subordination of Si Hoon, Kang Yu decided to stop by a shop for something delicious. He took out his phone to figure out where to go.

— Huh? — As soon as he took the phone out of his pocket, a melody played. Someone was calling.

Kang Yu looked at the caller’s name that flashed across the screen.

It was none other than Cho Dok Hyun.

The leader of the Andras Guild, who Kang Yu had asked to find out more about the Devil’s Teacher.

— What is it?

— I’m calling because I have some information.

— Information?

— Yes, that’s right.

— What did you learn about the Devil’s Teachers?

— I’m... I’m not too sure about it.

— Tell me. — Kang Yu gazed into the distance as he got ready to listen.

— We found traces of Magi in some footprints.

— Footprints?

— Yes. But... those footprints couldn't have been left by a human being.

— You're saying they weren't human?

— Yes. It looks more like some kind of animal's paw prints.

Listened to Dok Hyun, Kang Yu rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

Traces left by a monster that were imbued with Magi.

It was easy to guess what kind of beast it was.

'A Hellhound Guard?'

A creature that was called a splinter of the rift, here.

First the Hellhound, then the Demonic Wolf, and now, possibly, yet another creature.

— Where did you find these tracks?

— At the B-level gate of the state council.

— A level B gate... — The corner of his lips twitched.

'In that case, there's a good chance the Hellhound wasn't the most powerful monster to come from Hell.'

He'd already seen a Level C splinter in the Level C Gate and a Level D splinter in the Level D Gate. It was very likely that this monster is even stronger.

'Stronger than the Hellhound... It's likely to be a monster from the Second Thousandth Circle of Hell.' Like a hunter who was getting close to his prey, Kang Yu licked his lips with anticipation.

'When the Hellhound was killed, I leveled up by five units.' Kang Yu was quite certain of something. He was certain that he would get a lot more points for killing a rift splinter than for killing a Gate boss.

This time, if there was a monster from the Second Thousandth Circle of Hell, he would get even more points than for killing a regular monster at level B, and much more points than killing a Gate boss.

— That's...

Kang Yu opened the status window to check his level.

After killing the Demonic Wolf today, his level went up to 35.

If he were an ordinary Player, he would have had to hunt for a month or two everyday to go up by 5 levels.

However, ordinary logic and limits couldn't be applied to Kang Yu in any way.

'I think I'll get Rank 5 much faster than planned.' His lips curled into a smile when he thought about all the points he would get for killing off creatures from Hell.

CHAPTER 41

ONE EXTRA (1)

The next day, Kang Yu dressed up in the armor he received from the Red Rose Guild and headed for the Level B gate.

‘How uncomfortable it is to take public transport... I think I need a car,’ Kang Yu thought, frowning as he took the train to his destination.

Kang Yu didn’t exactly need an imported car that cost millions of won like Young-ju’s, but having a car at all would be nice.

‘When I’m done today, I’ll have to ask them to pick a car for me.’

Knowing how valuable he was to the Red Rose Guild, he figured they’d provide a car for free. Pleased by this thought, he got off the train.

— Well...

Kang Yu searched online to see what monsters would be waiting for him at this gate ahead of time.

‘There are quite a few of them.’ There was more than just one monster species in the level B Gate.

This Gate had all kinds of monsters ranging from level D to level B, including elite monsters.

‘The main representative of this gate is the Minotaur.’

They say it looked like a crossbreed between an Orc and one of the elite level A monster species.

Although it was just one of many creatures in the Level B gate, its strength could not be underestimated. The Minotaur is so strong, it is treated as a gate boss whenever it appears in the Level C gate. For this reason, it was best not to treat it as though it were

an ordinary monster like a goblin or orc. Hunting the Minotaur alone was not wise.

‘Well, I’m not interested in that creature at all.’ Kang Yu didn’t come here to hunt the Minotaur.

He had come here for a creature from Hell whose death could give him a much bigger reward.

— Huh? — As he approached the Gate, he overheard the heated discussion between the Players and guards, and frowned.

— No, what’s the problem? There are over five people in our party. Why can’t we come in?

— You think this place is so easy to go into?!

The Players standing in front of the entrance were engaged in a yelling match with the guards at the entrance.

‘What’s going on?’

Not only were there Players, but there was a crowd of people with cameras and microphones gathered in front of the entrance.

Kang Yu walked closer towards the turmoil.

— An unidentified monster has appeared at this gate and is being checked. We hope you will be able to understand the delay.

— No, it’s not even the boss! What kind of unidentified monster is this?

— We cannot provide any information on it at this time. However, ten Players have already been killed at his hands. For your safety, the entrance will be barred until the end of the inspection, — said one of the guards at the entrance. So this was why many Players were stuck outside.

‘An unidentified monster, you say?’ Kang Yu grinned.

If they were calling it an ‘unidentified monster,’ it was easy to guess which creature was involved.

‘Hellcats must be raging at the Gate.’ Otherwise the Players wouldn’t be blocked from entering.

‘But what kind of creature is it?’ In Hell, from the First Thousandth Circle to the Ninth Thousandth Circle, there were quite a few monsters.

Among them were creatures capable of trespassing territories and threatening the Greats.

(Editor’s Note: Reminder – the “Greats” aka the Seven Great Demons)

However, Hell’s creatures do not cross borders on purpose often, so skirmishes are quite rare.

— De... ten people...

— So many people have died...

— Are they really that dangerous?

A wave of anxiety ran through the crowd once they learned that ten Players had died because of the monster.

News of Player deaths in the Gates was common, but it was not the norm in Level B gates and above.

And for this number of Players to die... It was unheard of.

— Tell us more!

— The citizens are worried!

As soon as the crowd got into a panicked state, the journalists got down to business.

— At the moment, we’re not ready to provide detailed information on the creature. All we know is that it looks like a lion, but has five paws. He has never appeared at the Gates before.

The guards have made it clear to all the reporters that they had no other information.

‘Looks like a lion, but with five paws...’ Kang Yu considered the guards’ words carefully.

As far as Kang Yu knew, there was only one hellish creature that matched that description.

‘Boer.’

It was one of the strongest Devourers in the Second Thousandth Circle of Hell.

‘As I expected, the creatures of the Second Thousandth Circle of Hell are beginning to appear.’ To some extent, this could be considered proof that the higher the level of a Gate, the stronger the creatures from Hell would be.

— If it’s a Boer... — Kang Yu recalled everything he knew about this creature and thought about the number of victims again.

‘If 10 victims have been killed, it most likely appeared at the Gate two days ago.’

The Boer had one feature that made him different from other creatures.

He doesn’t eat more than five victims a day.

No matter whether they are small or large, he eats five victims a day, and then he will not initiate combat first, being in the digestion phase.

That’s why it’s not difficult to calculate that he must have been at the Gate for two days, if he had only killed ten Players.

‘If it’s really him, it’s simple.’ The Boer is a creature that doesn’t require complex manipulation to hunt.

All you have to do is feed a Boer five other monsters so that he stops initiating combat. In this state, it would not be difficult to catch him.

‘Maybe I should sneak in.’ Kang Yu did not hurry towards the troops guarding the entrance.

He wasn’t going to use the Power of Oblivion as he had done last time to sneak in.

‘There’s no need to be so secretive.’ Kang Yu smiled a bit and pulled out his smartphone,

then hit the dial once he found the right contact.

— What is it?

He heard Chae Young-ju's familiar voice.

— I have a request for you.

— You have a request?

— I want to go to the Level B Gate, but the government is conducting a check here...

— Are you already at the Level B Gate right now?

— That's right.

— Is that why you're asking me to give you access to the entrance?

— Yeah. You can do that, can't you? You have a good relationship with all kinds of high-ranking people in the government.

— Oh... — Putting the phone at a distance for a bit, she took a deep breath before responding. — Do you have to go in there? —

— I have important business to attend to.

She stayed quiet for a while, and then she clicked her tongue and continued quietly:

— This is not a cheap favor.

— Don't worry, I'll pay you back.

— Yes, yes. Of course. You're not going to die at the hands of that unknown monster, are you?

— If I were such a weak person, you wouldn't be sponsoring me.

Even though Young-ju didn't say anything out loud, Kang Yu could hear her swearing at him inside her head.

— Wait a bit. There's a government officer there, right? Give him the phone.

— Okay. — Kang Yu slipped through the crowd of reporters and gave one of the military officers his phone.

— Again, the Players aren't allowed to enter...

— Red Rose Guild Commander Chae Young-ju is on the line.

— What...? — The officer, concerned, immediately took the phone from Kang Yu's hands.

The reporters were staring at Kang Yu with distrust and confusion in their eyes.

— Chae Young-ju...? Is he talking about *that* Chae Young-ju?

— Who is that person to Chae Young-ju? Was there a Player like that in Red Rose?

Ignoring the crowd's noisy murmuring, the officer continued talking to Young-ju on the phone.

The soldier called a few more places and warily heaved a sigh.

— Oh Kang Yu... We got permission for you to enter the gate. You, as a member of the research team, have the right to study the creature and attack if necessary. You will be obliged to provide any and all information you get to the government. Do you consent?

Kang Yu, hearing that he had access to the gate, smiled widely.

— Of course. I will do a thorough study so that the people can sleep without worrying about this unknown creature, — Kang Yu proclaimed clearly without hesitation.

— Woah!

— Hurry... take a picture of him!

The journalists, smelling sensational news, pointed their camera lenses at him.

— If a member of a Guild has the right to enter, so do we! — At that moment, six people, pushing the journalists aside, came forward.

Five guys and one girl. All of them, looking at Kang Yu with disgust, moved to the entrance.

— I'm Kang Seon Soo from the Mir Guild!

— The guy that the Guild actively supports?

— It's only been three months since he became a Player, and he's already reached the Level B Gate?

It seems there was someone famous among them, making the crowd go wild.

The man named Kang Seon Soo, with his hair tucked into a ponytail, sauntered towards Kang Yu.

— So you're the one who's sponsored by Red Rose? — He looked at Kang Yu from head to toe, a nasty sneer curled on his lips.

He met Kang Yu's eyes with an impertinent look.

— It must be you, since you have their high-end equipment.

Kang Seon Soo walked around Kang Yu with a smirk.

— What's going on? Shouldn't you have a bunch of teammates? Isn't that part of their sponsorship?

The corners of Kang Yu's lips twitched into a lazy smile, and he calmly replied:

— I'm much more comfortable hunting alone, so I don't need the support of their teammates.

— Huh. I heard you hang out at the Level C Gate... Does this gate look like a Level C gate to you?

Where did this guy hear that from? He seemed to know quite a lot about Kang Yu.

Rumors of Young-ju personally offering to sponsor him must have spread quickly.

Kang Seon Soo deliberately kept picking on Kang Yu:

— You're not all that special. There are people like you everywhere.

Kang Yu's stretched smile began to fade away.

Seon Soo's jokes were hurting his pride.

— It seems that you want to become famous by catching this unknown monster. Since when is it possible to be so self-assured when you only have four ranks?

'Seon Soo.'

— Huh? Can't you talk?

'What's wrong with you, Seon Soo?'

— Ha-ha-ha! Suddenly you're acting dumb?

'You're dead, jerk.'

Kang Seon Soo, encouraged by Kang Yu's silent behaviour, wrapped his hand around his neck.

— How's that? You wanted to go on a walk in the gate, right? I'm taking care of you, I won't let you die a dog's death in there.

There was heavy silence.

Kang Yu's serious expression changed to a smile and he nodded.

— I didn't know you cared that much about me! — Kang Yu extended his hand to Seon Soo, offering a handshake. — Let's go together. Actually, it *was* a bit creepy for me to go there all by myself. —

Kang Yu gave his friendliest smile and cast a glance at the party.

The number needed to satisfy the Boer's hunger was five.

'There's one extra.'

CHAPTER 42

ONE EXTRA (2)

— What? — Kang Seon Soo was thrown off by how readily Kang Yu agreed to hunt together.

‘This isn’t how it’s supposed to be.’ He’d been waiting for the guy to react in a completely different manner. Seon Soo dropped his act and turned serious.

For some reason, Kang Yu didn’t get mad at all.

He definitely didn’t seem like a psycho on sedatives. Does he always react so calmly to people he doesn’t know?

‘In front of journalists, his reaction should have been more aggressive.’ He recalled the order of his own sponsor, the man named Kim Yeong Hoon.

As soon as Kim Yeong Hoon had caught wind of the news that the Player sponsored by Chae Young-ju had appeared near the gate, he immediately called Seon Soo and ordered him to publicly humiliate Kang Yu.

Mir Guild and Red Rose Guild were always at odds with each other. The plan was to provoke Kang Yu into fighting Seon Soo in front of the media to make the headlines say the Player sponsored by Mir Guild was much stronger.

Chae Young-ju didn’t seem to know much about this newcomer. She needs help to see just how weak and useless he is.

‘After all, this is the kind of dirt that, once it’s there, can’t be washed away for the rest of your life.’

Because Kang Yu is still just a newcomer, if he was publicly humiliated, the labels attached to him would never disappear.

It doesn’t matter how good he becomes in the future. Everyone would always think he’s weaker than Seon Soo after today.

Reputation is very important.

‘But if I start a fight now, I’ll look pathetic,’ Sung Su thought as he noticed Kang Yu’s oddly wide smile.

‘Ah?’ When he saw his smile, a chill ran through his body and there was an unpleasant feeling. ‘What’s he smiling for?’

Seon Soo, overcome by the sudden feeling of anxiety, began to think of a way to get out of this situation.

The sound of his pounding heartbeat was so loud, he could barely hear himself breathe.

No matter how hard he thought, nothing came to mind.

If he backs out from Kang Yu’s offer, he’d put the image of his guild at the bottom.

Seon Soo’s hands were tied.

If only Kang Yu had ignored his jokes from the start, he wouldn’t be in such a conflicting position.

‘Bastard.’ Seon Soo turned his head sharply to glare at Kang Yu.

Kang Yu didn’t seem to realize what they were here for, so he must have agreed to hunt together because he was genuinely scared of the unknown monster.

‘Well, if that’s the case, then we can handle this quickly.’

Seon Soo didn’t know why Red Rose chose to sponsor this guy, but if he’s this cowardly, he wouldn’t be a problem at all.

— Well... Let’s go,— he said to his teammates, staring directly into Kang Yu’s eyes.

They all followed Seon Soo into the gate.

— Woah! Look, the Mir Guild and Red Rose have teamed up!

— Oh, that’s great. Two of the great guilds, united, are entering the gate to capture the

unknown monster!

For the media, Kang Yu and Seon Soo joining together as one party was a great headline. They watched the people entering the gate with anticipation in their eyes.

* * *

When they entered the gate, they found themselves in the stone labyrinth, where Minotaurs usually lived.

The labyrinth even had a stone ceiling. It seemed that they arrived straight in the monster's den.

As soon as Kang Yu arrived, he gestured to the maze and spoke with a shining smile:

— Well, shall we team up and try to capture the unknown monster?

Kang Yu's question was so simple and natural that Seon Soo was in disbelief.

When Seon Soo fell to the floor, he said:

— Don't you have any pride at all?

— What?

— Huh, you're either pretending not to know what I mean or you really are stupid...

— Seon Soo, just ignore him. We expected a lot from him because he was chosen personally by Chae Young-ju, but he's just a fool, — said a girl wearing a blue dress, heaving a sigh.

— I think that Chae Young-ju must be fooling around. They say she came to him personally and offered to sponsor him... As expected, our Deputy Guild Commander Kim Yeong Hoon is the best.

— That's right. Not only did he successfully inherit his family business, he's also a handsome man.

— As they say, 'the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.' He's just as amazing as his father. He's on his way to the World Ranker list now.

— Ha-ha. There's no guild like ours. He's the only rich man who decided to become a Player and create a guild.

They had started praising their own guild as if they'd forgotten Kang Yu was there... or maybe they were just ignoring him.

Guild Commander of Mir, Kim Yeong Hoon, and Chairman of the largest corporate organization, Mir Electronics.

Five years ago, when the Gates had suddenly appeared, he decided to become a Player and quickly became powerful thanks to the financial strength of his company.

That's how the Mir Guild was created.

'A guild created by a corporate organization.' Kang Yu's eyes were sparkling as he gazed at the party members. 'They've got a strong financial backing.'

Given that large guilds already earn a lot, it was scary to imagine how much money the Mir Guild gets from their Player earnings and the electronics business combined.

'What if I start a war between these two guilds?' If he did that, Kang Yu would definitely benefit from both of the guilds.

— Hmm... — While Kang Yu thought about it, he tilted his head.

'But I'd feel guilty doing that to Young-ju.' She'd given him so much that it would be dishonorable to start a war between her guild and Mir Guild. 'And it's better to remain allies with Red Rose in case I ever need their help in the future.'

Betraying Young-ju for instant gain was like killing a chicken that lays golden eggs to eat its meat.

— Where is that unknown monster? — Seon Soo excitedly asked, wandering through the maze.

Trailing slowly behind him, Kang Yu answered calmly:

— First, we just have to keep exploring.

— Do you think I'm asking you? You're so stupid, how could any idea from you be

useful?

— Ha-ha-ha. I'm sorry. — Kang Yu feigned a smile, playing the part of a fool, and turned his eyes to the party members.

'Seon Soo...' Although he had a smile plastered on his face, Kang Yu was raging with anger. His pride was hurt. 'Seon Soo, are you this confident in your abilities?'

Lazily following him, Kang Yu used the Observer's power to figure out the location of the Boer.

He felt the Boer's presence not so far from them.

'It seems he hasn't satisfied his hunger yet.'

The monster was on a rampage hunting for food.

[Power of Temptation]

Applying the Power, a scent that could attract Boer to them wafted through the air.

— What the? Do you smell that?

— I can smell it. And something's drooling incessantly...

Seon Soo and his teammates, smelling the scent, started looking around.

'It's coming.' Kang Yu could sense the excited Boer rushing towards them, breaking through the walls.

Kang Yu took a few steps back, waiting for the monster to approach Seon Soo and his posse.

There was a roar.

— Wha... what the...?

— I think something's coming!

— Get ready to fight! — Seon Soo shouted, sensing an unknown monster approaching.

— And you stay silent. Don't even think about telling people we caught it together. —

Kang Yu looked at Seon Soo, who hadn't forgotten to throw in a nasty remark even in this situation, and smiled.

'You can say goodbye to your life.' Kang Yu didn't think that Seon Soo and his party stood a chance against the Boer.

A hungry Boer was so strong that even the creatures in the Third Thousandth Circle of Hell could not fight against it.

Even if Yeon Ho, with 7th rank, tried to fight it off, it's hard to say if he could even win.

Accordingly, Seon Soo, who only became a Player just over three months ago, would never be able to fight it.

— He's coming! — Seon Soo took out his spear and prepared to attack.

'He's like a monster himself.' Seon Soo was the Player who, after attaining a Class A special ability in Rank 1, rose to Rank 5 in three months.

It was hard to find 'monsters' like Baek Kang Hyun and Chae Young-ju who reached even higher levels in three months.

So, of course, Seon Soo was confident in his abilities.

— It's people like you who die first.

Kang Yu and Seon Soo had switched roles.

— What? — Seon Soo faced Kang Yu's direction with a panicked look on his face.

Seon Soo almost thought there was someone else talking. It didn't sound like Kang Yu at all.

When Seon Soo turned around, Kang Yu was smiling again, his arms crossed over his chest.

But this time, the smile didn't make him look airheaded at all. This time, his smile was full of anger.

— This crazy guy...

— Seon Soo!

— What?

— What are you doing? This is a grave situation, and you still have time for small talk?!

— What... — The moment Seon Soo had turned his back on the monster to look at Kang Yu, the wall was broken down by the Boer and his group was attacked.

Both the Players and their shields were being swung away in all directions.

— What the... — Seon Soo's eyes widened. He hadn't expected the unknown monster to be so strong.

The Boer, charged at the Players who had flown away, its mouth wide open.

The monster easily bit through their armor, and dark blood poured out of their bodies.

Seon Soo, who was no longer interested in fighting Kang Yu, stepped forward and gripped his spear tighter.

— Ahh! — He focused Maryok at the end of his spear and a blue light came out of his tip.

Seon Soo swung his spear once he felt the timing was right.

— The power of Light!

The spear, covered with sharp thorns, flew straight to the monster's head.

Confident in his own power, Seon Soo stepped forward after throwing his spear to attack.

But the Boer easily caught and munched on the weapon.

Seon Soo, terrified by such a powerful foe, fell backwards.

— Ah...? Huh? — Seon Soo looked up and down at the Boer in bewilderment.

He was shrouded in the feeling that perhaps, something had gone wrong after all.

CHAPTER 43

ONE EXTRA (3)

The Boer roared out, and everyone turned to him.

The large tiger-like monster with five paws swallowed his drool at the sight of his 'food.'

The Boer had caught a whiff of the appetizing scent of humans, which, in fact, was amplified by Kang Yu using the Power.

The Boer bared his fangs and threw himself at his prey.

— What the hell is this thing?!

— Blo... block his way!

Seon Soo's group, terrified by the sudden appearance of the Boer, drew out their weapons.

But the monster was so strong that he threw the tank aside with one blow.

The group stood no chance in stopping the Boer.

— Aah! Sa... save me!

The Boer bit the Player pointing a sword at his throat.

The Player did his best to free himself from the mouth of the beast with the sword, but the Boer was too strong.

His body snapped in half, and his organs were oozing out bright red blood.

— Aah! Aah...

Seon Soo's group watched the Boer's actions with fear.

It's a monster.

A monster devouring human flesh.

It was the first time these Players had encountered a real monster, and the first time they had experienced such terror that shook them to their bones.

Kang Yu had also experienced this kind of fear once, but with experience, he no longer felt frightened by monsters like this.

Seon Soo's party had raised their levels so quickly that they'd forgotten how terrifying monsters could be.

Their greed had overcome their fear. Monsters were now nothing more than a source to earn money and increase their levels.

But the Boer easily reminded them just how fearful a monster can be.

— What are you doing? Hurry up and attack it!

But Seon Soo had lost his spear. And his teammates could hardly move in their stupor.

Fear overwhelmed their minds more and more.

The Boer, watching his motionless prey, made a joyous cry and dashed towards them.

Each of his five paws had claws as sharp as blades, which he was going to use against the Player carrying the large sword.

The Player raised his sword, trembling, hoping it would somehow give him a better chance at survival.

The Boer grabbed the sword with his claws, and with a characteristic clash, the metal broke into several pieces. He grabbed the Player by the waist.

— Aaaah!

The sharp claws of the monster were digging into the Player's back.

The sound of his ribs breaking could be heard, and scarlet blood began trickling down

his body.

The first thing it did was bite off the Player's head.

— Seo... Seok Hyun! — shouted out a Player holding a thin sword. He stepped towards the monster.

But he didn't have time to accumulate Maryok, and his sword broke against the beast's thick skin.

The Boer, using his long tongue like a lasso, caught the Player.

The Player's body easily snapped in half by the Boer's tongue as if he were just a toy.

The girl in the blue dress could only watch this eerie scene, unable to use magic, and unable to even scream.

She turned on her heel and ran in the opposite direction, screaming: 'Save me!'

As she ran past Seon Soo, her dress, unfurling in the wind, brushed past the guy.

The Boer slowly turned his gaze to the prey that was trying to get away.

Not only did his paws have sharp claws, but they were also quite long, and he easily reached out and sank his claws into the girl's back, tearing her blue dress. He snarled loudly, clutching onto his prey.

She, in disbelief at what was happening, turned her head and looked at the claws stuck in her back. Red blood was flowing out of her mouth.

And then, the Boer's fifth victim disappeared into his mouth.

— What... what's going on?! — Seon Soo, looking at where his teammates were standing just a moment ago, fell to the ground in shock.

There was a wet spot between his legs.

The guy looked up at the Boer with horror.

He knew he was about to be swallowed alive by that monster himself.

— Huh? — Against his expectations, the monster did not attack.

Not only did he not attack, he even yawned, as if the hunt had been successfully completed, and rolling into his own body, he settled down to rest.

— So he's satisfied.

— What the...? — While looking at the tranquil image of the creature who had just been rampaging around, he noticed Kang Yu approaching it.

Seon Soo didn't understand why he was doing that.

Kang Yu looked at the Boer lying on the ground, smiled, and brought forth his right hand.

'Once he's full, he won't attack. He'll just lie still.'

It's very easy to defeat a sated Boer.

It only takes one blow.

Still, the blow must be strong enough to take his life in one go.

Kang Yu concentrated powerful Magi in his outstretched hand.

'I'll use a double forked spear.'

It was necessary to use a magi spear, as mentioned in the legends.

Using the Power of the Dark Spear and the Power of Hellfire at the same time, he could achieve the effect needed.

At both prongs of the spear was a Hellfire flame.

Using the two Powers at full potential simultaneously required time, but with the Boer's hunger satisfied, time was not an important factor.

Kang Yu received a notice.

[You've improved your skills in using Dual Powers (Rank: S)]

[Your skills have been honed, the use of this technique will be easier in the future].

Along with the message, the Hellfire burst into larger flames as it consumed more of his Magi, and Kang Yu felt a slight dizziness.

He threw the spear filled with Magi into the creature.

The Boer, being in a state of satiation, did not react in any way to the spear headed at him and allowed it to pierce himself.

The two sharp ends of the spear passed through Boer's thick skin, and the flames of Hellfire burned inside him.

Even though the Boer was the strongest creature of the Second Thousandth Circle of Hell, he could not resist such a powerful blow.

A warning sound was heard.

[You have successfully killed a Level B splinter of the rift]

[Level up by 6 units]

[When you reach level 40, you get Rank 5.]

[Bonus point limit raised, you get 7 Magi units]

[Reaching 60 units of the Magi, you open the first stage of the Devil's Blessing.]

— What kind of Devil's Blessing is this? — There was one thing among the notifications that Kang Yu could not understand, and he turned his side to the side.

'Sounds like the title of a novel.' It was an unusual word combination, so Kang Yu expanded the status window to learn more about it.

[Information]

Devil's Blessing: The first stage of becoming the devil.

Stage One: Getting 60 units of Magi

Stage Two: ????

Stage Three: ????

‘What a vague description.’ Kang Yu frowned when he read the information provided in the status window.

It wasn’t specified what it was, and it wasn’t clear how it would benefit him.

Not only that, the next two steps to achieve this Devil’s Blessing weren’t even indicated.

‘The first stage of becoming the devil...’ Doesn’t sound like something too bad.

Moreover, Kang Yu thought that achieving this Devil’s Blessing could help to gain great power.

‘I don’t think that’s what happened back in Hell.’

When he was the master of the Ninth Thousandth Circle of Hell, he never received a Power called ‘Devil’s Blessing’ or anything like that.

Kang Yu gazed at the information about the Devil’s Blessing with interest.

‘I think my expectations are being met.’ He’d thought that by becoming a Player and continuing to grind for power, he could become even stronger than when he was in Hell. Much stronger. ‘Perhaps I will become God myself.’

This time he had a chance to obtain an even higher position than before.

He certainly didn’t know the opportunities this Devil’s Blessing would open up for him, but his heart was beating faster for some reason.

— I thought my thirst for power had subsided, but I guess it didn’t.

His demonic part kept craving power.

Kang Yu had believed that as he gradually got stronger, his thirst would begin to fade with time, but each time there was a new opportunity to get stronger, he was enveloped in a suffocating desire to get it.

‘I guess I’ll start by eating the Boer’s body.’ Kang Yu needed the Magi from the Boer’s body to quench his thirst at least a little.

Since he’d entered the Gate under the guise of a researcher, he should have left the Boer’s body intact, but Kang Yu was not prepared to sacrifice an instantaneous gain of power for the government.

‘I’ll leave the head for them. If I tell them that the rest of the body was lost in battle, there should be no problem.’

Kang Yu, activating the Devourer’s Power, approached the Boer’s dead body.

Magi wrapped around it in black smoke.

Magi began to move from the monster’s corpse to Kang Yu’s body, with the faint sound of drying flesh.

[Magi elevated by 4 units]

‘As expected, killing creatures from Hell gives much more Magi.’

He’d just reached 60 units of Magi, and now he had 4 more. That was proof that the Boer was truly strong and possessed a lot of Magi.

‘Ah, I forgot to test my new special ability.’ He’d been distracted by the Devil’s Blessing and completely forgot that he received a new ability when he reached Rank 5.

Kang Yu again opened the status window to learn more about the ability.

— You... who are you...? — Seon Soo’s frightened voice came to him.

He was shaking, and he looked at Kang Yu with the exact same look he had given to the monster before.

Of course he was in a state of shock. Only moments ago, that terrifying creature had destroyed his entire team, and then Kang Yu killed that same monster in one blow.

The corner of Kang Yu’s lips raised as he strode towards Seon Soo.

— Ah! Stay back! — He didn’t have the strength to stand, and desperately shuffled

backwards with his hands.

Kang Yu was approaching him slowly.

— I thought you'd be the first to die. Your survival wasn't part of my plan.

— Don't go near me, I'm warning you!

— You're upsetting me. We're from the same party. — Kang Yu squatted next to Seon Soo and put a hand on his shoulder.

Seon Soo shouted in terror:

— Are you going to kill me?!

Kang Yu made his eyes wide, as if to say 'what nonsense.'

— What are you talking about? How could I kill a member of my own team?

Seon Soo didn't say anything.

— You seem to have the wrong idea about me. I'm not that bad, Seon Soo. — Kang Yu put his hand on the guy's head and cracked a smile. — There's still work for you, you can't die now. —

CHAPTER 44

TEARS OF KANG YU

— When you say ‘work...’ What exactly do you... — Seon Soo looked at Kang Yu with horror in his eyes.

He patted Seon Soo on the back a little, standing up again.

— Don’t be so scared~ First, I’m going to ask you something.

Tears started spilling from Seon Soo’s eyes, and he whimpered.

— Who told you to make fun of me? — Kang Yu didn’t think that Seon Soo had any reason to pick on him.

Seon Soo, biting his lip, turned to face the ground. When Kang Yu saw that, he swiftly kicked his head like a ball.

The guy’s teeth cracked and his mouth bled.

Kang Yu again put his hand on the shoulder of the trembling man.

— Well, I’ll ask again. Who gave you that order?

— Ki... Kim Yeong Hoon.

— Kim Yeong Hoon? — As far as Kang Yu knew from previous conversations, that was the name of the Mir Guild’s Commander.

‘They said he’s a handsome man with second generation wealth, and he’s also talented.’ Kang Yu couldn’t understand why such a reputable man ordered for him to be humiliated.

— One day, Chae Young-ju hit and crippled Yeong Hoon. Since then, he’s hated the Red Rose Guild.

— Is that why he ordered you to humiliate me? Because the Red Rose is helping me?

— It's because Mir needs to look better than Red Rose...

'Huh, he's dumber than I thought.' Kang Yu dropped his fake smile.

The girl in the blue dress had admired Yeong Hoon so much that Kang Yu grew an interest in him, but it turned out he was simpler than expected.

— Do you have a picture of him?

— Yes... I do. — Seon Soo pulled out his phone from his pocket and quickly found a photo.

The person in it looked very young and attractive.

'What?' Kang Yu looked at the photo again and squinted his eyes.

It was definitely the first time he saw the person in the photo, but it reminded him of someone.

'Kim Si Hoon?' For some reason, the young man resembled Si Hoon. 'Maybe it's because they're both beautiful.'

But when it comes to beauty, Si Hoon was superior.

Kang Yu didn't brood long about this, and returned the phone to Seon Soo.

— So I was just involved in that idiot's revenge, right?

— Pr... I'm sorry! I just got the order and there was nothing for me to do but follow it!

— Seon Soo hurriedly said, folding into a bow on the floor.

— You say that, but you really followed that order diligently.

— It's...

— That's okay. After all, life is about helping each other. If you agree to work for me, I'll look past this matter.

— I... I'll do anything, just say the word!

— Ha-ha-ha. Don't worry about it. My request won't be difficult. It's rather quite the opposite, it may even benefit you.

Seon Soo stared at Kang Yu, confused.

Kang Yu just smiled.

* * *

Meanwhile, in front of the Gate's entrance.

— Shut up, everybody! Quiet, please!

The journalists, smelling a great piece for headlines, were gathered in front of the gate.

The officers had asked them many times to calm down, but to silence such a crowd was not so easy.

A creature that had never appeared at the Gate before — an unknown monster.

What's more, the Red Rose and Mir have teamed up to capture it.

The journalists' eyes were burning with curiosity, adamantly staying in front of the entrance to get as much information as possible.

— ! Ah?

— They're coming out!

Two men came out of the gate.

— That's...

— Kang Seon Soo and Oh Kang Yu!

— What happened to the other teammates?

— Did they die in the clutches of the unknown monster?

The crowd excitedly watched Kang Yu and Kang Seon Soo coming out of the gate.

— What happened? — The reporters were quick to ask Kang Yu while extending the microphone to him.

The man ignored their questions and instead shouted loudly:

— Quick... call an ambulance! — Kang Yu placed Seon Soo on the ground.

— Ah?...

The crowd collectively cried out, noticing the strange appearance of the guy.

Seon Soo's whole face was covered in blood and his body was covered in terrible wounds.

— Ahh! S... sav... — Seon Soo moaned in pain.

He stretched out a trembling hand, as if asking for help.

— It was... it was like...

They began wondering what could've happened at the gate to put Seon Soo in this state.

'Terrible.' In other words, it was impossible to describe this situation.

Kang Yu had a frightened expression, and he clenched his hands as if he was gathering his courage to speak.

— We were fighting an unknown monster... and that's when it happened.

— In that case... the other Players...

— Yes. Only Seon Soo and I survived. The other Players... they're all dead, — Kang Yu said with a serious expression, and bit his lip.

When people heard about the death of Seon Soo's party, they began to chatter amongst themselves again.

— Were... the talented newcomers of the two guilds defeated?

— How strong was that monster...

— Hurry up! We need to tell the whole Hwaran squad as soon as possible, let them send their men in there!

Knowing that even the two Players talented enough to be sponsored by the most powerful guilds could not stop the monster was enough to spark fear in their hearts.

They understood that if they did nothing about it, the monster would probably break through the Gate eventually.

Kang Yu, looking at the frightened people, continued in a low tone:

— You don't have to worry. The unknown monster has been destroyed. But... victims...

— Woah!

— Kang Yu, did you defeat him?

Kang Yu heard the crowd cheering.

A shadow clouded over his face as he bent his head down.

— No. It wasn't me who destroyed the unknown monster.

— In that case...

— The hero who destroyed the monster and saved my life is Kang Seon Soo.

— Woah! — The crowd, listening to Kang Yu, made a brief exclamation.

He sighed heavily, put his hand on Seon Soo's body, and spoke in a trembling voice:

— Seon Soo, who fought the monster, realized that the situation was critical when he saw his comrades die. So he told me to run away and was left alone with the creature.

— He continued to act frightened. — However, I could not escape by myself, so I stayed until the end to help Seon Soo. Even though he was risking his life, he fought boldly to the end and won. It was a very hard and tragic fight. —

There was silence.

— After he won, Seon Soo repeated the names of his teammates until he fainted.

After hearing Kang Yu's full story, people stared at Seon Soo with looks of pity and heartbreak.

The Player who had fought bravely and saved a man's life, now unconscious.

The story of him calling out his dead teammates before he fainted tore at their hearts.

Journalists adored such stories and could already see great headlines.

— Could you tell us more? — The journalists, trying to find out more for their articles, moved their microphones closer.

They no longer showed interest in the hero lying on the floor.

It didn't matter to them at all whether he was hanging on a thread from death, in pain, or asking for help.

Now, they were only interested in the heartbreaking story that could become a great story on paper.

— When we entered the gate, we felt a spiraling breath of anger.

— That means...

— That's right. The monster was waiting for us near the gate.

The journalists, waiting for Kang Yu to continue, swallowed nervously.

— The moment we laid our eyes on the monster, it was terrifying. There was no way we expected to meet a monster that strong at the Level B Gate.

— What did it look like?

— Just like the officers described it: looks like a lion on the outside, but with five paws. Each player in the Seon Soo party died from a single blow.

— Huh? From... from a single blow?

— How is that possible...?

Everyone knew that the other players were quite strong, even if they weren't as strong as Seon Soo.

From the start, the Mir Guild sponsored groups of strong Players, so everyone thought that all Mir Players were powerful fighters.

— We realized we didn't stand a chance at winning and thought about leaving. But if we did that, the beast could have followed us from the Gate, and there could have been human casualties.

— Oh.

The more Kang Yu talked, the more tension there was among the journalists. They gripped their microphones tighter and listened carefully.

— At that moment, Seon Soo told me that we couldn't let the monster come out and ordered us to block the passage.

— Ah...

— Seon Soo and I fought hard, but the wounds made it hard to fight. I've already told you the rest. In the end, Seon Soo decided to take all the risk himself and just barely managed to defeat the unknown monster.

The reporters exclaimed in admiration when they heard of Seon Soo's heroic behavior.

Suddenly, one of the reporters asked Kang Yu a question:

— But it looked to us like Seon Soo was aggressive towards you when you met outside the Gate. What do you think about that?

Suddenly, everyone was silent waiting for his reaction, but Kang Yu continued quietly:

— After we went inside, Seon Soo told me the reasons for his behavior. He was worried about a Player who just started getting Red Rose's support, so he tried to keep me from entering the gate alone to catch the unknown monster.

— Ah... I see.

— I'm sorry that I didn't realize his intentions earlier. — A warm tear rolled down Kang Yu's cheek. — He is the savior of my life and the hero of our time.—

* * *

'The Appearance of a Hero who Defeated an Unknown Monster... '

'Fighting Emotions. The Reason He Fought to the End... '

'Newcomer of Mir Guild Kim Seon Soo was immediately taken to the hospital in an unconscious condition. Over 30 million won has been raised to support him.'

'A hero who has not come to his senses. Because of a brain hemorrhage, he's in a vegetative state... All the hospital bills of Kang Seon Soo have been paid.'

'Another star caught fire in the sky.'

CHAPTER 45

ECHIDNA (1)

— What is with this reaction... — Chae Young-ju muttered, bewildered as she flipped through the headline articles about Kang Seon Soo.

Kang Yu, who was sitting in front of her, shrugged his shoulders like it was nothing.

— All I did was feed them what they wanted to hear. Humanity never loses its craving for heroic stories.

People always remember the names of famous heroes, and Seon Soo perfectly conveyed the heroic image.

— Were your tears during the interview fake?

— Of course.

— What's the purpose of this play?

— To upset them, of course. — Kang Yu downed a gulp of coffee, leaning against the table, and continued indifferently: — It was only by introducing them to a hero that I could move the attention away from me. —

If people recognized him as a 'hero,' it would cause a lot of problems.

If there were benefits to becoming famous, he wouldn't have minded telling the press that he was the one who killed the unknown monster. However, he wouldn't gain any benefits if he became famous now.

'On the contrary, it will be uncomfortable.' The more attention he drew to himself, the more limited his actions would be.

Besides, considering that Kang Yu often acts outside the rules of law, having the journalists watch his every move would not be good for him.

He didn't want to put himself at a disadvantage.

'But I won't be able to hide all my life.' If Kang Yu continues to improve at the same pace, it'd only be a matter of time before people will start noticing him. 'When that moment comes, then I'll think about what to do.'

If he couldn't avoid that situation, it was better to look at what benefits would come with it.

Kang Yu placed his cup of coffee on the table and looked at Young-ju.

Taking a deep breath, she asked:

— So what really happened at the Gate?

She knew that Kang Yu couldn't have been hurt by the unknown monster at all.

He wasn't the kind of person to be easily frightened or hurt.

No matter how strong the monster was, it could never have bested Kang Yu so easily.

— It's not a big deal. Seon Soo's guys were the first to fight the monster, and then I killed it when I had the chance.

— Are you sure the monster was the one who hurt Seon Soo?

— That's right.

— It looks more like he hurt himself or someone did it to him.

— You're wrong. — Kang Yu was calm in answering her questions, which was sounding more like an interrogation.

Young-ju looked at the man with suspicion.

Every time she talked to Kang Yu, somewhere inside, she felt a stifling pressure.

He was a more talented Player than she originally thought.

But the problem was that he had more than just 'talent.'

For his own benefit, he was willing to do anything, no matter how immoral or unethical. He showed no remorse for his actions.

‘I don’t think I’m raising a kitten, but a tiger cub.’

The girl, wary with doubt, shook her head and continued:

— Hmm... First of all, tell me more about this unknown monster. — Even if he held the truth of the fight from her, the priority of today’s meeting was to learn more about the monster.

Kang Yu nodded and told her about the Boer. Of course, he kept quiet about the ‘satiated’ stage, when the monster becomes completely harmless.

— A monster with this much power in the Level B Gate... — She crossed her arms behind her head, staring blankly into the distance.

If Kang Yu was telling the truth, the monster was so strong that it was hard to believe it would even appear at the Level B Gate.

‘It should’ve appeared in Level A, or even higher.’

Even if a monster like that appeared at the Level A Gate, it wouldn’t be an ordinary monster but an ‘elite’ one.

Although there seems to be a small difference between the Level A and B Gate, the strength of the monsters actually differ drastically.

‘According to the news, a lot of strange things have been happening lately.’

Starting with the appearance of the Devil’s Teachers and now an unknown monster.

Ever since that day, five years ago, the world has been looking for stability, and because of what is happening now, the world is being shaken again.

‘Come to think about it, the appearance of the Player Oh Kang Yu coincides with the beginning of all these strange things.’ It’s hard to believe, but only a month has passed since then.

Around the same time he became a Player, the Devil’s Teachers appeared, and

monsters with strength beyond their Gate levels showed up.

‘But this is all just coincidence.’ Young-ju shook her head and stared at Kang Yu.

Kang Yu’s unusual pace of development did not prove his connection to the Devil’s Teachers nor the unknown monsters.

She couldn’t suspect him without good reason.

‘What’s more...’ The girl looked at the man sitting in her office blowing the steam from his cup of coffee.

Frankly, she didn’t think he was a particularly nice person.

However, no matter how selfish he was, he didn’t look like the Devil’s Teacher, who was certainly a real psychopath.

‘He’s not that bad.’ At least that’s what she wanted to believe. ‘Anyway, he and I are in the same boat right now.’

Because of what happened, there were rumors about Oh Kang Yu, and how he’s sponsored by the Red Rose Guild.

Of course, there aren’t as many articles about him as there are about the hero Seon Soo, but if you searched deeply enough, you could still find some information.

In particular, he was being labeled as a reliable partner of Red Rose.

— What are you thinking so hard about?

— Huh? Nothing...

— I have a question for you.

— You have a question? — She looked surprised, and tilted her head to the side.

He continued quietly:

— Do you know anything about the ‘splinters of the rift?’ — Kang Yu wanted to learn more about the notifications that appeared when he killed the creatures from Hell.

There was a chance Young-ju would know something about it.

— No, it's the first time I've heard of it.

— Huh... I see.

— What is this about?

— When I killed the unknown monster, I received a notice that I destroyed a Level B splinter.

— Oh... — She nodded and her eyes sparkled with interest. — I'll try to find out about it. —

Kang Yu nodded his head and continued:

— There's one more thing.

— Tell me.

— When are you planning to tell me about your request?

— Ah... — Young-ju's facial expression darkened as soon as it was mentioned.

Kang Yu spoke seriously:

— I think you heard about how they call us reliable partners. However, there is one unresolved issue in our relationship.

The girl didn't say anything.

— You've already invested so much in me. Would it hurt if I suddenly refuse to comply with your request?

— Oh...?

— Don't worry too much about it. If your request isn't too unreasonable, I'd like to continue our partnership, too. — Kang Yu kept talking and leaned over the back of the chair in front of Young-ju's desk. — So, isn't it time to open the veil of mystery? —

— Ha... — Young-ju let out a sigh.

When the girl realized there was no way to evade this, she started talking:

— There are some bastards who call themselves the Devil's Teachers.

Kang Yu remained silent.

— I can't say how many of them there are or when exactly they came out. But lately, they've been showing themselves.

— Go on...

— These are psychos who kidnap people to sacrifice them. Our guild, united with the government, is trying to track them down.

— So...

— So I was planning on asking you to help us destroy these Devil's Teachers once we catch their trail. We don't have any solid proof yet, but we're sure this pseudo-religion is very strong.

A heavy silence filled the room.

Kang Yu finally understood why Young-ju was going around gathering strong Players.

'She plans to wage war against the Devil's Teachers.' It's no surprise that one of the largest guilds was aware of this situation, considering the government was trying to gather information on them.

'Not bad.'

No, it was more than just 'not bad.'

If Kang Yu, who was initially pursuing the Devil's Teachers anyway, could get the support of a large guild and the government, it'd be great.

'The only thing I don't know is... '

Kang Yu, with a frown, said:

— Why are you so interested in destroying them?

Chae Young-ju didn't answer, and kept her lips pressed together firmly.

It was clear why the government is after them.

The main purpose was certainly to ensure the safety of the civilians.

But such a thing wasn't exactly Young-ju's responsibility.

She was no law enforcement officer, so she should have no reason to hunt them.

Of course, if a person was acting according to their morals, he or she would want to stop these Devil's Teachers.

But Young-ju, as a leader, should first and foremost take care of her subordinates.

She couldn't put the guild in danger just to satisfy her sense of justice.

'She won't benefit from it either, unlike me.' Kang Yu had already received quite a few Magi through their ritual.

Since she wasn't interested in Magi, she had no other reason to go to war with them.

— First of all, I'm not volunteering to do this for free. If we catch them, we will receive decent compensation from the government.

— Oh, so the reward is the rea...

— Besides that, I have another reason. — Young-ju quietly cut off Kang Yu's words.

Kang Yu could feel anger coming from the girl.

Her hatred was so strong that it made her feel like her lungs were filling up with fluid.

'She really is strong.'

Feeling Young-ju's murderous hatred, Kang Yu thought this.

It was the first time that he felt her strength like this.

‘This is why she’s at the top of the Korean Players.’

He could barely contain himself from inviting her to fight and find out how strong she is.

— At their hands, one of our Players died. I can’t let it go on like this. Absolutely not,
— she said in a cold, icy tone.

‘It must have been someone important to her,’ he thought. It was easy to guess from how emotional she was acting.

Kang Yu nodded affirmatively and responded seriously:

— I understand. I will fulfill your request.

— Thank you...

— I told you I’d pay you back properly.

Saying that, the man changed the subject.

— Did you do what I asked?

While Young-ju had called him to find out more about an unknown monster, Kang Yu had come to pick something up.

— Yes. — Young-ju took a rectangular card out of the drawer.

It had a picture of Kang Yu and permission to enter the S-level gate.

— I’ll ask you again just in case: you’re not going hunting there, are you? If you are, I can’t give it to you.

— For the hundredth time, I’m not going to.

— So why do you need that pass?

— There’s something there I want to check. — Kang Yu smiled a little and took the S-level gate pass.

After sticking the card in his pocket, he left the Red Rose building.

On his way to the parking lot, he opened his status window.

‘I can finally use it.’ He opened the status window and looked at his special ability of Rank 5.

CHAPTER 46

ECHIDNA (2)

[Special ability Rank 5: Master of Hell Creatures (Rank: S)]

[Application: You call upon a creature of hell. The stronger the creature you call, the more Magi is used.

*The called creatures will see you as their master.

*This ability can be used every three months.]

‘I can finally test it.’ Kang Yu looked at his special ability of Rank 5 with expecting eyes.

A feature that allowed him to summon a creature from Hell and make them his ‘pet.’

The value of this ability was dependent on the creatures he’d call.

‘It would be wonderful to make a Boer my ‘pet... ’

A Boer possesses power that only Players above 7th rank could oppose. Or so he guessed.

‘What a shame.’ Kang Yu was thirsty for power. ‘I can’t use that ability more than once every three months.’

In that case, it was important to choose carefully and call on the most powerful and appropriate creature.

‘That’s why I got this card.’ Kang Yu took the S-level gate pass out of his pocket.

There was only one reason why he didn’t test this earlier and instead waited for the pass to be made.

‘Splinters of the rift appear at the Gate.’

And it wasn't just them.

When Kang Yu arrived on Earth, the first place he appeared was at the Gate.

'The Gate may be the bridge between Earth and the other worlds.' Otherwise the creatures from Hell would've gone straight to Earth, not the Gate.

'The higher the level of the Gate, the stronger the creatures who appear.' That was a fact already proven during the Boer hunt.

However, by that logic, then it was strange that Kang Yu, lord of the Ninth Thousandth Circle of Hell, arrived in the E-level Gate.

'Although it's not completely unreasonable.' His Powers had been sealed when he arrived on Earth.

And now, as his level increased, the force sealing his Man Ma Jung was weakening, and thanks to the Devourer's Power, he could gain more Magi and recover his strength. But it was a fact that when he arrived on Earth, he was indeed very weak.

From this perspective, then everything would make sense.

'Anyway, I'm sure that stronger creatures appear in higher level gates.'

Which means Kang Yu needs to go to a high-level gate to call a strong monster.

'Level S... ' Kang Yu excitedly looked at his gate pass and remembered Young-ju's warnings.

The S-level gate was the highest-level gate available in Korea, with only two entrances in the country: Suwon and Pohang.

'I heard there is an SS Level Gate and even higher abroad,' Kang Yu thought, 'but that's not possible at the moment.'

The areas around Gates at the SS Level and beyond were completely fenced off, denying entry to anyone without a pass. The monsters that lived there were simply too powerful.

Some known locations were Hokkaido in Japan and Shanghai in China.

Since these two places are heavily populated with monsters, people do not venture there, and the government tries their best to keep those areas separate from the outside world.

‘In the end, the only one I can gain access to is the S level gate.’ Kang Yu headed for the parking lot, thoughts of the remote places with higher level Gates on his mind.

‘It’s so much more convenient to have a car.’ Kang Yu, after dealing with the Boer, had asked Young-ju not only for a gate pass but also for a car.

Of course, his wasn’t as cool as Young-ju’s car.

‘And yet, she said it was worth a few billion won.’

Kang Yu had been informed about all the features of the car before he was given the keys, but he had absolutely no interest in brands or such small details; it didn’t matter to him what kind of car it was as long as he could drive it.

He opened the gate and grabbed the steering wheel.

Kang Yu had wasted no time in getting his driver’s licence, so he had no problem driving.

[The route to Suwon has been laid out.]

Kang Yu quickly found the location of the S-level Gate in Suwon with his navigation device, and decided on the best route to get there.

‘As expected of a Level S Gate.’ There were no other Gates or Players in its area.

Instead, there were government and military units everywhere, guarding the area.

‘This is where they say the first squad of Hwaran is based.’

The first and second squads guard the gate 24 hours a day in case any of the monsters got out.

— Identity confirmed. Entry permitted.

Kang Yu handed his pass to one of the Hwaran Squad gate guards and went inside.

— Oh! — A cry of admiration came out of Kang Yu's mouth upon entering the gate.

Inside the S-level gate, there were many lakes surrounded by rocks from all sides.

— It's spacious. — Kang Yu couldn't even see the edges of this gate.

Kang Yu wasn't sure of the exact size, but compared to a low-level gate, it was enormous.

'I think it was said that this gate is the size of Seoul.'

Remembering the information Young-ju had told him about this gate, he used the power of the Observer to avoid monsters. Kang Yu reached a remote cliff and prepared to call on a creature from Hell.

'Hell Monster...' Kang Yu couldn't stop thinking of the Boer.

In some situations, the Boer was much stronger than other demons living in Hell.

However, no matter how strong he was, he was still different from the demons capable of thinking and reasoning.

Humans are weaker than lions and tigers, but they were the ones who owned the Earth. It was the same in Hell. It wasn't the strong monsters who ruled, it was the intelligent demons.

'That's why you can control Hell's creatures.'

And if it's possible to subdue their will, then it's also possible to direct their killing force in the right direction.

'My goal is Cerberus.'

The Cerberus was the most powerful creature living in the Third Thousandth Circle of Hell, which even demons of the Fourth Thousandth and Fifth Thousandth Circle of Hell could not oppose.

— Well, let's begin. — Kang Yu closed his eyes and began to focus.

Powerful Magi began to emit from his body.

He was using as much Magi as he could.

Drops of cold sweat trickled down his forehead.

Because of how Magi evaporates, wind was circling around him, like a storm about to start.

The soil, unable to withstand the power coming from Kang Yu, started to crack.

The ground turned red, divided by thick cracks. It became completely dried up, as if all life was sucked from it.

‘Now!’ At the right moment, his special ability began to take effect with all his Magi spilling out.

[You used the special ability of the 5th rank of ‘Master of Hell creatures’ (Rank: S)]

[Creating a rift to apply the ability]

Along with the notices, a blue crack appeared in the air, similar to broken glass.

The crack gradually increased in size until it formed a twenty-meter blue gate.

— A blue gate? — Kang Yu, who was tired and confused, didn’t realize he was speaking out loud.

Usually, the gate was white, gray, or black.

Kang Yu had never heard of a blue gate.

‘Did I screw up?’ Furrowing his eyebrows, he looked at the gate.

But he could feel his Magi inside that very gate.

Besides, the failure message hasn’t come up yet.

[A rift has been successfully created]

[Magi, blending in with Man Ma Jung, has created a wider rift]

[System error has lost communication with the outside world]

[Gates will open to RNO]

— What? — Kang Yu, reading the notices before him, frowned. — What the hell is RNO?

Not understanding what was written, Kang Yu's face gradually grew darker.

[Hell Creature Calling commenced]

From the 20-meter blue gate, a bright light shone, drowning out everything.

Gradually, the light began to fade and a creature crawled out of the gate.

— What... that's... — Kang Yu mumbled quietly when he gazed at the monster.

Black scales.

Two wings.

Two bright reptile-like eyes.

— A dragon? — A dragon was coming out of the Blue Gate, standing at its full height.

Notifications sounded again.

[The call of a Hell Creature has been completed!]

[You have called Echidna (Rank: S) — Half-snake-Half-Female]

[Player Oh Kang Yu is now the owner of Echidna. If the level of devotion declines, attacks from the called creature are possible.]

Kang Yu, after reading the notice, pressed his lips together firmly.

The creature named Echidna was looking at her new master, who was standing on a cliff with a serious expression.

He was frowning not because he now had a dragon, but because of her appearance.

She was breathing so quietly that it seemed like she was about to die.

Her wings were so thin that they could be pierced with any sword.

Small pieces of flesh were hanging between her wings.

Covered with stab wounds, Echidna was bleeding scarlet blood.

‘What is happening now?’ The creature called by his ability was ready to fall dead at any moment.

While Kang Yu was at a loss at what just happened and how it happened, Echidna was slowly approaching him, gasping weakly for air.

At that moment, people’s silhouettes appeared from the blue gate that the monster had just come from.

— Huh? — Kang Yu looked at the people who came out of the gate in bewilderment.

There were five of them.

It was as if they had just finished a fight, and they were brushing dust off themselves.

— «#%:<%Nº»@%!!!

A young man with golden hair, who appeared to be their leader, noticed Kang Yu and immediately started waving his hands.

‘Is he talking to me?’ Kang Yu squinted, watching the people shouting at him in an incomprehensible language.

Kang Yu used the Power of Common Language to understand what the strangers were saying.

By using the Power, the language that sounded alien before, Kang Yu could translate their words.

— It’s dangerous! Hurry up and run away from that fierce monster!

When he realized what the people were screaming, his expression reflected even

greater puzzlement.

‘Who are they?’

CHAPTER 47

ECHIDNA (3)

‘Who are they?’ Kang Yu looked at the young man with golden hair who was waving at him.

‘Are those foreign players?’ The leader had long golden hair and a typical European appearance, wearing enviable powerful armor and grasping a golden sword.

He didn’t look at all like the usual Players he ran into.

‘Wait a minute...’ Kang Yu looked more carefully at the Players, frowning.

Each of them held some kind of weapon: a hammer, a shield, a bow, and a staff.

The man with the shield and the dark-haired woman with the bow was nothing unusual.

But there was a short girl with golden hair, holding an onion...

‘Dwarves and elves?’ Kang Yu thought they were humans at first, but now he realized they were all round-faced dwarves and blond elves. ‘What kind of party is this? They look like characters in a novel.’

Kang Yu gawked at them with a baffled expression.

The elf at the head of the group stepped closer to Kang Yu and loudly yelled:

— Hey?! Hurry up!!!

— Ronald, calm down! — The elf with a bow stood in front of the blond elf. — Look at the dragon! He’s almost dead! —

— Oh...

— He won’t hurt people anymore.

— Phew, thank God. — The elf with golden hair took a deep breath as if coming to his senses.

— Who are you...? — Kang Yu asked in their language, using the Power of the Common Language.

The elf calmly answered his question in a polite manner:

— I am the third prince of the Arnan Republic, Ronald Arnan.

— The Republic of Arnan?

— Yes. And you are?

Kang Yu, confused as to what was going on, was still staring at the group across him with bewilderment.

His mind was trying to put the puzzle pieces together: the gates opened through RNO, Arnan Republic, and Ronald.

‘Did they... come from another world?’

The two facts known to Kang Yu were not enough. He knew the gate was opened through something called RNO, and along with the dragon called out of it, people had come from the gate.

What’s more, these people were dwarves and elves.

The guy was increasingly inclined to believe the theory that they must have come from another world.

While Kang Yu was lost in thought, he heard Echidna make an agonizing groan.

He lifted his head and saw Echidna watching him, wounded and breathing with difficulty.

‘Oh shit.’ Kang Yu realized that the monster he had just tamed might die immediately.

But he had waited over a week just for this moment.

‘I’ll have to treat her.’ If he missed the opportunity to tame this creature now, he’d have to wait three months until he was able to attempt calling another one.

‘That’s unacceptable.’ Even though three months wasn’t a long wait and the absence of a ‘pet’ wouldn’t make him feel deprived, he didn’t want to lose the pet he had only just obtained.

Kang Yu approached Echidna, who was ready to fall dead at any moment, and extended his hand to her huge body.

— Wa... wait!

— What the hell are you doing?!

As soon as he reached out to Echidna, Ronald immediately screamed at him.

Kang Yu turned his head in the stranger’s direction and spoke in a serious tone:

— She is my subordinate. I don’t know why you’re so eager to kill her, but you better give it up.

— You lousy bastard!

— So you’re the master of this dragon!

Ronald’s party immediately raised their weapons and pointed them at Kang Yu.

Ignoring them, he focused on tending the dragon’s wounds.

‘She’s bleeding a lot...’ There was a continuous flow of blood coming from the long cut along her body.

Kang Yu used the Power of Blade to produce a small knife, and sliced his wrist with it.

[The Power of Revival]

Blood flowed from the cut he made.

Filled with the power of regeneration, it seeped into Echidna’s wounds.

'Ew... phew... who...?'

Echidna's wounds began to heal at a great speed.

The dragon that was just ready to fall to the ground raised her head and stared at Kang Yu.

As if suddenly realizing something, Echidna mumbled in a calm voice:

'Ah... So you're my master.'

Her eyes, as large as a grown man, were filled with tears.

'I'm sorry to appear in front of you like this.'

Kang Yu didn't hear her the way he could hear people. Her thoughts went straight into his head.

He gazed at the dragon with a serious expression.

'I don't know what's going on, but like the notice said, she seems to think I'm her master. But this situation is... '

Kang Yu turned his gaze to Ronald's armed group.

It wasn't difficult to guess who were the ones to wound Echidna.

— You, show yourselves! I'm only going to ask you one question.

Kang Yu couldn't let them kill Echidna. Having to wait another three months would be tedious.

It was clear from the group's eyes that they wouldn't leave until they finished what they had started, and that Kang Yu was now their enemy, too. As soon as they'd found out Kang Yu's relationship with the dragon, their speech style changed dramatically and they no longer showed courtesy to him. Therefore, there was no need for flattering conversations.

He just needed answers.

— Why are you trying to kill Echidna?

— It's a terrible dragon!

— What did she do? — Kang Yu started interrogating the enemy group.

To be more precise, he was buying time to heal Echidna's wounds.

'First, I'll find out what's going on.'

All he'd wanted to do was summon a powerful monster from Hell.

But he ended up summoning elves and dwarves along with the dragon. It was certainly not part of Kang Yu's plans.

— He brought us drought and a plague! The magic of this dragon has killed dozens of city dwellers! Was that your order, too?! — Ronald shouted out in a voice full of hatred.

'Drought and plague...'

There was definitely a lack of detail in his story.

— It wasn't me who did all that... — The dragon mustered up the energy to speak.

— Shut up, you dirty dragon! If you didn't do it, then who did?! — Ronald grew even angrier at Echidna's words and shouted louder than before.

Kang Yu frowned and turned his eyes on Ronald's group.

'It could have been a natural phenomenon, jerk.'

Kang Yu felt like he had plunged into the Middle Ages, a period of witch hunting, when natural disasters were blamed on witches and all girls who looked suspicious were burned alive.

'Well, I won't be able to find out the truth behind what happened.' Perhaps Ronald's beliefs were actually true, and the plague and drought was somebody's doing.

After all, Kang Yu himself lived in a world where there was magic.

You can't blindly think of every strange happening as just a natural phenomenon.

'However...'

Kang Yu took a deep breath and turned his eyes back on Echidna.

He was convinced that the dragon had nothing to do with the drought or the plague.

And it wasn't because she gained his trust in the few minutes they'd gotten to know each other, no.

Simply: how could she have caused a drought?

Let's say the plague really was her handiwork, but in the event of a drought, she'd need *tremendous* power to dry the air to the point of causing drought.

A force capable of destroying an entire nation.

Echidna's power could hardly even be compared with the great demons of Hell, who were capable of much more.

— Is that the only reason you're going to kill Echidna? Just because of this?

— 'Just because of this?!' Do you have any idea how much suffering the drought has brought to our people? What about the fact that our state is on its way to death?!

— How should I know?

— For the sake of saving our citizens, we must kill this dragon! — Ronald declared, his eyes filled with a sense of justice.

Kang Yu narrowed his eyes as he stared at Ronald.

'I don't like these kinds of jerks at all.'

Kang Yu's most hated type of people.

Those who justify their actions as 'doing their duty,' while closing their eyes and ears to all else and blindly rushing to end things their way.

To put it bluntly, they're idiots with whom it's impossible to come to a compromise.

'Ha-ha... Ha-ha... '

Thanks to Kang Yu's use of the Power of Revival, Echidna's lost breath began to recover.

Her bleeding wounds had been healing at a tremendous rate while Kang Yu was distracting Ronald's group.

'I bought enough time.'

Deep wounds took much longer to heal, but at least the dragon was no longer at death's door.

'My subordinate.' Kang Yu carefully examined Echidna's entire 20-meter body.

Originally he'd planned on calling Cerberus, but the situation turned out different than he expected.

Still, it wasn't that bad.

'It's a dragon after all.' Kang Yu's ability to summon and conquer a dragon was proof of Kang Yu's power.

He didn't know how different Echidna was from Cerberus, but a dragon could be trained, so it was incomparable with other creatures.

'Sorry, but I can't let you kill Echidna. I've tamed her.' Kang Yu took his hand off the dragon and headed towards Ronald.

Of course, Kang Yu had no absolute proof that it wasn't Echidna who caused the drought and plague.

Even if she couldn't have caused the drought, there was still a chance that she might have caused the plague.

It's very likely that Ronald really is a brave and righteous hero, and that Echidna is a brutally killing creature.

'But what difference does it make?' All that mattered to Kang Yu was the fact that this

dragon, by submitting to Kang Yu, now had a special value.

It's necessary to take care of everything that can make a difference, and avoid anything that is more harmful than beneficial.

That's why Kang Yu didn't care whether she was or wasn't a terrible monster.

She had value.

Kang Yu wasn't stupid enough to throw a winning lottery ticket in the garbage.

— You devil! — The golden-haired man shouted out, raising his sword and throwing himself at Kang Yu, eyes burning with justice.

Kang Yu grinned and said:

— I really am the devil, dummy.

CHAPTER 48

ECHIDNA (4)

— I knew you were the devil!

When Ronald heard Kang Yu proclaim he was the devil, he frowned, glared, and tightened his grip on the hilt of his sword.

— For the sake of my people in Arnan! For the weeping children! I, Ronald von Arnan, will execute you myself!

Maryok, glowing in a holy gold color, started coming out of his body. His long blonde hair began to develop in the wind, reminiscent of a scene from a movie.

Following his example, both the middle-aged man standing behind him with a shield and the dwarf holding a hammer moved towards Kang Yu.

— Ha-ha! Well done, Ronald! If you could catch the dragon, you can handle the devil too!

— We'll have to drink dark beer later with our newcomers,— Ronald said to the middle-aged man and dwarf.

Hearing Ronald say these words, the cheeks of the girl dressed in a brown dress puffed into a pout.

The elf standing next to her sighed and uttered a sigh:

— Whatever you please. But Ronald, your opponent is the devil. Do you think you can handle it?

— Whether I can do it or not, it doesn't matter! I just have to do it! — Ronald declared resolutely, and raised his sword to the sky.

'Look at him, that's eloquence.' Kang Yu winced when he looked at Ronald's eyes, which seemed ready to burn with real flames.

In this situation, he should have been trembling with fear.

‘What’s wrong with these guys? They need to see a doctor.’

Ronald and his party were lost in their own atmosphere of passion and excitement.

The sharp sword of the golden-haired man suddenly flew towards Kang Yu.

He reacted quickly and readied his black blade for battle.

To his surprise, the elf’s sword split in half and exploded.

Its impact was comparable to a real bomb, shaking the ground around him.

‘I should be more careful.’ Kang Yu had no idea that the sword could split into two and explode.

‘As expected, the equipment is helpful.’ If Kang Yu had no equipment, he would have suffered from the unanticipated attack.

But thanks to Moon Yeon Ho’s armor and a few epic-level items, the blast in the air caused no damage to Kang Yu/

While Kang Yu was thinking to himself about the benefits of his equipment, Ronald turned to his companions:

— Get ready to defend.

It was time for a retaliatory strike.

[Power of Explosion]

In Kang Yu’s hands, the black smoke began to take on a spherical shape.

Once the ball was fully formed, Kang Yu firmly clenched his fists.

[Melting Rain]

A special technique created by Kang Yu using the Power of Explosion.

The sphere that had been the size of a basketball suddenly split into dozens of spheres the size of a billiard ball.

Kang Yu lifted his hand slightly and the spheres flew towards Ronald's party.

— Defense! — The middle-aged man raised his shield. — Ouch! —

He screamed as his shield formed a blue wall in front of them.

Kang Yu looked at it and couldn't hold back a grin.

— Too bad. You failed.

The dozens of spheres flying in their direction changed trajectory sharply and headed straight for the ground beneath them.

The young man standing at the front of the party was sent flying by the force of the blast wave.

— Hans! — Ronald cried out, and whipped his head to look at Kang Yu with hatred: — How dare you?! —

'You started it, idiot.' If someone saw the angry look on Ronald's face now, they'd think Kang Yu was the one who attacked first without warning.

Kang Yu stared at the outraged blond man indifferently.

— I'll never forgive you!

— Neither will I, you jerk.

The man was acting as if he'd already forgotten that he was the one to attack Kang Yu first.

Kang Yu pushed off the ground and flew towards Ronald.

— First rank fencing: Lightning Blade!

'Why does everyone rush into battle loudly calling out the name of their technique?' It's easy to guess an attack from its name, so announcing it would only be a setback to

destroying your opponent in one blow. 'It makes it possible to prepare the necessary defense.'

Kang Yu sharpened his gaze and used the Power of Iron Curtain.

As the name implies, the sharp swords flying towards Kang Yu were redirected like a hurricane. Just as they reached him, the blades ran into an invisible wall and rebounded back to the blond man.

— Ronald!!!

— You bastard!

The dwarf and elf helped to block the counterattack while Ronald continued shooting attacks at Kang Yu.

Kang Yu nonchalantly turned to the side and three arrows whizzed past his head. After successfully avoiding the attack, he swiftly raised his hand in the axe-holding dwarf's direction.

[Lightning Strike]

The charge instantly hit the target, and the dwarf was thrown far back, choking in pain.

Kang Yu moved closer to finish what he started.

— Take this! Fireball! — At the same time, someone shot at him.

It turned out to be the girl standing behind him with the staff.

Her attack was so strong that Kang Yu, who felt slight pain even through his armor, thought she posed a higher threat than the dwarf. Deciding to get rid of her first, he turned in her direction.

Ronald, who had been thrown back, rushed at Kang Yu again.

The golden light exuding from his body was proof that he was strong. The earth around him trembled like there was an earthquake.

'I guess he's not that weak.' Kang Yu glanced at the blond and decided to leave the girl

alone for now.

Ronald, with his holy power, was a little stronger than Moon Yeon Ho.

In this state, he was most likely strong enough to kill a Boer.

Kang Yu and Ronald faced each other, both in a fighting stance.

Their golden and black forces merged in the air, destroying everything in their path.

The golden sword split into two and exploded again.

Because the explosion happened right in front of his eyes, Kang Yu's body was sent flying.

— Ha! Did you see that, lousy devil?

Kang Yu couldn't believe what was happening right now.

'If I hadn't focused on getting rank 5, I'd be in danger.'

Ronald's skills exceeded all expectations.

Based on strength alone, he might well be stronger than Kang Yu.

'Maybe he was hunting a dragon for a reason, though.' When he thought about saving Echidna, Kang Yu clicked his tongue impatiently.

'However...' Kang Yu's eyes gleamed coldly. 'He's only physically strong.'

As Kang Yu approached Ronald, he screamed out loud:

— Boomerang!

Reacting to Kang Yu's scream, Ronald took out his sword and prepared to defend himself.

Kang Yu, however, did not use a boomerang at all. Bending low, Kang Yu kicked at his opponent's legs *hard*.

Ronald bent over in pain, wrapping his arms around his bruised legs, and bawled.

— You dirty demon! You said ‘Boomerang!’ — The man glared at Kang Yu with unforgiving eyes.

‘You’re just stupid.’ Kang Yu wasn’t one of those fools who screamed the name of the attack in advance.

Making use of his opponent’s foolish habits had given the Player a huge advantage.

— Ro... Ronald!

— Ah... Everyone... everyone, run. He’s too strong!

— It can’t be! You’re telling me to leave you here?!

— Hurry up! — Continuing to clutch onto his wounded legs, Ronald screamed.

Hot tears rolled from his eyes.

— Good job! — Kang Yu, as if watching a drama film, smiled lightheartedly and approached the blond man.

— You... — Ronald scowled at him with a burning look.

Kang Yu understood his anger but didn’t hesitate to stand close to him.

‘This fight is already over.’

For a soldier, the most important thing is his legs.

If his arm had been cut off or his ribs had been broken, he could have continued to fight, but in a situation where his legs were hurt, everything was different.

A soldier who was unable to move could only be compared to a vegetable given an automatic rifle.

— Ah... h... hurry up, run! — Ronald wasn’t stupid enough to not know the severity of the situation, so he tried his best to chase away his teammates.

More than anyone else, he was aware of the hopelessness of his situation.

‘It’s time to finish this.’ Kang Yu, using Klink’s power, created a bastard sword to pierce Ronald with.

There was no compassion or hatred in his eyes.

For Kang Yu, a ‘fight’ was nothing special.

He’d always fought to survive. Emotion was an impermissible luxury.

— Wait a minute!

— Raina...?

At that moment, a dark-haired girl ran up and blocked Ronald with her body.

Sobbing, she pleaded:

— I... I beg you! Don’t kill him! If he dies, the Arnan people will lose hope!

Kang Yu didn’t respond.

— And more importantly... Ronald is the man I love very much.

— Raina...

The girl named Raina kept crying and gently caressed Ronald’s cheek.

— I’m sorry to confess like this. But... but if not now, I may never get another chance.

Looking determined, she turned to Kang Yu.

— Take my life instead. I’ll do anything you say. I’m begging you! Please let him live!

Kang Yu listened to her pleas and pressed his lips tightly as he contemplated. Then, he said with a smile:

— You know, that was brazen of you.

Kang Yu walked slowly to Ronald and Raina as he kept talking.

— What? With his death, will the people lose hope? What am I supposed to do about that? What does that have to do with me? You were the ones who attacked me first. I didn't do anything wrong, did I? If our roles were reversed and I was the one who begged for mercy, would you let me live? Would you? — He continued in cold blood: — No, right? It's impossible. You were armed, too. If you're going to use weapons capable of killing, you should also be prepared to die. —

Kang Yu grasped Ronald's hand.

There was an explosion, and powerful Magi flowed from his hands.

Kang Yu looked at the pair in front of him, screaming and shaking in terror, and continued in a low tone:

— We're in reality, not a TV show.

CHAPTER 49

ECHIDNA (5)

— This...

— You ugly, filthy man! — Ronald hollered in frustration.

‘No, what are you talking about?’ Kang Yu had defeated them fair and square.

Even if he had cheated by shouting out a fake technique name, it was Ronald’s own stupidity that led him to be fooled by such a childish trick.

‘What’s nasty and dirty about that?’

Ronald was the nasty one, for leading a whole group of five people to go against Kang Yu.

‘I wonder if that manhwa character felt the same way when he had to defend against a party all on his own.’

If that was the case, then he must have felt injustice.

Kang Yu brushed off the thought, not wanting to lament about it anymore, and formed another spherical charge of Magi to launch at the sweet couple.

— Oh, by the way.

— Uh, what?

— Hmm...

Kang Yu waved his hand, and the balloon of Magi evaporated.

As soon as the balloon disappeared, hope reappeared in Ronald and Raina’s eyes.

— I’m worried about your equipment.

It was clear that Ronald's equipment wasn't cheap.

Kang Yu would never wear it because of its flashy appearance, but if he sold it through Young-ju, he could make some good money.

'Especially that golden sword.' Seeing it in action, it was easy to tell it was a high-end item. 'I wonder how much money I'd get from selling it... '

Kang Yu eyed Ronald's equipment and licked his lips eagerly.

— What a terrible person! — Ronald exclaimed, realizing that Kang Yu was already planning to sell the equipment of someone he was about to kill.

Kang Yu could care less about the guy's remarks, and created weapons using the Dark Spear Power.

'It's enough to stab him in the throat with a spear.' Kang Yu approached Ronald with these thoughts in mind, when suddenly, a notification sounded.

[It's been confirmed that a non-called creature has passed through the Gate.]

[System will remove now the foreign creatures.]

— Huh...? — Along with the unexpected notification, the bodies of Ronald and his party members became semi-transparent.

Even though Kang Yu hurriedly threw a spear at the guy, it flew through the translucent body and stuck in the ground.

— Oh shit! — Kang Yu cursed.

Kang Yu wasn't happy to look at the notices that came in.

'Why now?'

How dare the system let the foreign creatures in and make them disappear so suddenly!? The system was at fault.

Kang Yu, angry, kicked at the innocent soil and just watched with a sour look as the whole party dissolved right before his eyes.

[Foreign creatures successfully removed by the system.]

— Ugh... — Kang Yu took a deep breath.

‘Just a second.’ Before he could exhale, Kang Yu hurriedly turned his head towards the place where Echidna was.

For a moment, Kang Yu thought the system would also bring Echidna back to her place of origin along with the ‘foreign creatures.’

— Phew, — Kang Yu breathed quietly when he saw Echidna, still lying there and watching him.

Fortunately, Echidna hadn’t disappeared.

‘What kind of ‘system’ is this?’ Kang Yu remembered that on his first day on Earth, he had also encountered the system. ‘Some kind of protection from... the outside world?’

It could probably be roughly compared to Earth’s atmosphere protecting the planet from meteor collisions.

It was the most likely explanation, considering the few known facts.

‘There was a system error when the gate opened.’

Kang Yu definitely remembered that the gate opened to some place called RNO, which caused a system error that prevented closing the gate to the outside world.

‘I wonder if this has anything to do with the recent appearance of Hell’s creatures at the Gates.’

The appearance of unknown monsters began only recently.

Judging by the timing...

— Huh? — That’s when Kang Yu had a theory.

‘The moment Hell’s creatures start appearing is about the same time I returned to Earth.’ The probability that other monsters entered the gate because of the system malfunction he created was quite high.

— If that's true... — Kang Yu paused in perplexity. — Is it me who's causing the system malfunction? —

Based on the timing, that theory was possible.

— Oh... — Kang Yu, baffled by these thoughts, put a hand on his head.

It was making him feel a little uncomfortable.

'Isn't there any way to restore the system?' In the current situation, the best thing to do was correct the error.

But he didn't even know what the 'system' is or where it is, so it was impossible to come up with a plan.

'Right now, the only thing I can do is catch as many Hellcats as possible.'

Even if what he was doing was merely bailing water from a sinking ship, there was no other method at the moment.

Kang Yu concluded it would be a good idea to ask Young-ju what she knew about the system, and went to Echidna.

— Stay still a little longer, you need to be treated properly. — The healing power Kang Yu had used to stop her bleeding was nothing more than an emergency fix.

It'd take a while longer for her to recover to a state where she can move around on her own.

Kang Yu sliced open his wrist again and let the blood drip into Echidna's wound.

She could hardly lift her head to look at him.

— It's not me. I wasn't the one who caused the drought and the plague.

— Okay.

Tears flowed out from her large eyes.

— I said it wasn't me, that I had nothing to do with disasters, but nobody believed me.

Will you believe me?

Her voice was shaking.

She had the look of an abandoned child wanting to find a loving person.

Kang Yu knew that look very well.

‘It’s the same as me.’ His parents had left him early on in his childhood.

He’d spent his entire childhood in an orphanage. He never even considered meeting his parents and being in their arms again.

But he wanted to be loved by someone. He wanted to be taken care of and valued. He wanted his existence to feel needed.

Echidna heavily reminded him of himself as a child.

‘We’re in reality, not a TV show.’ Kang Yu felt his chest tighten with pain and smiled bitterly.

The words he’d just said to Ronald sharply returned to Kang Yu like a boomerang.

Sad memories surfaced in his mind.

‘I have to answer her.’

Echidna was a creature whom he had tamed, so she was destined to spend her life with him.

But he wasn’t going to give the following answer just because of that.

— I believe you. Even if the whole world condemns you, at least I’ll be on your side.

Now Kang Yu was fully responsible for her.

And he wasn’t going to hide from this responsibility.

He was not going to throw his ‘pet’ out on the street and only use her for his benefit.

— You... — Echidna looked at Kang Yu in awe.

She lightly licked at her wound with Kang Yu's blood dribbled over it. There was a cure in his blood that could help Echidna.

Beads of sweat ran down his forehead.

'I think I'm a little overwhelmed today.'

A summon, a battle, and a cure.

No matter how strong he was, even with the 5th rank, today's events were very tiring for Kang Yu.

'I want to go back and get some rest.' For the first time, Kang Yu was eager to get rest.

'But...' The guy looked at the large, 20 meters tall Echidna. 'How do I get her out of here?'

Bringing Echidna out of here like this would cause chaos in the world.

In the worst case, Hwaran Squad will get involved and kill her.

'Even if I explain everything, I still don't think they'd let it pass.'

To present her as a 'pet' and get her out of the gate without any problems, she'd have to be at least as small as a human in height.

'I've heard about some Players who tamed monsters.'

But even then, Echidna was too big.

She couldn't exactly roam around unnoticed by the Hwaran people.

— Echidna, would you happen to know how to resize yourself?

— Resize?

— Yes, to the smallest possible size.

Kang Yu wondered if she, like many other dragons, could transform.

He looked at Echidna with anticipation.

— I know how to do that.

‘Excellent!’ When Kang Yu heard her answer, he nodded approvingly with a big smile.

— Change to the smallest size possible.

— Okay. — Echidna, with her wounds partially healed, nodded and started to whisper something in an incomprehensible language.

Glowing brightly, her size began to shrink more and more.

Kang Yu’s eyes shone as he watched her transform to about 30 centimeters.

‘Oh, what a cutie.’

A giant dragon in a small form gave off a very different impression.

Now she looked even more like a pet.

‘I wonder if she can turn into a human?’ While Kang Yu thought about it, he wrapped both arms around her small body to carry her.

— It’s okay, I can fly on my own.

— Don’t rush, your wounds haven’t completely healed yet. — Kang Yu hugged Echidna closer to him and headed for the exit.

Echidna raised her head and stared up at him. She murmured softly:

— You...

— Mm-hmm?

— Tell me your name.

— Oh, right, I completely forgot to introduce myself.

With the intense events that took place one after the other, he never got around to

introducing himself.

— Oh Kang Yu. My name is Oh Kang Yu.

— Oh, Kang Yu... — Echidna, snuggled comfortably in his arms, whispered his name several times. — I'll remember that. —

— Hm?

— Your name. I will remember it, — Echidna said confidently.

Kang Yu smiled a little and nodded his head.



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